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December 2015

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COVER STORY



Charcoal walls, a snow-flocked tree and white snowflakes create an elegant look in this Canadian home (see page 26).



120



32



II

104

NEW - BUILD

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UNIQUE

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WELCOME

If you're looking for ideas on how to dress your Christmas tree this December, then look no further as there's plenty of inspiration in this month's issue. From full-sized conifers to artificial firs and bunches of twigs adorned with decorations, you should be able to find something that catches your eye. I'm always tempted to thin out branches from a conifer to create a layered effect (see page 120) because it allows you to really see the decorations, but I've never tried it because I'm slightly apprehensive of cutting too much away. I know that the upside-down option is designed to show off your favourite baubles, but I can't quite get my head around it, so this year, I might buy a small tree on which I can experiment. Usually, our conifer is decorated in one colour – either all white or all red – which may explain why I'm particularly taken by Butter Wakefield's tree on page 42, which is all green. Regardless of whether you choose one that is real, artificial, large or small, what this issue does illustrate is that each tree expresses the personality of its owners with their choice of either homemade decorations or a carefully edited selection of baubles. You might, like me, feel for a brief moment that decorating your tree is a task, but once it's up and the fire is lit, I really get in the Christmas spirit and the festivities can begin.

Deborah

DEBORAH BARKER, EDITOR IN CHIEF

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kobo



COMING NEXT MONTH - ON SALE 3 DECEMBER



RURAL ESCAPE

With a little TLC, this run-down Cotswolds cottage has been transformed into a rustic retreat



WHITE CHRISTMAS

Quirky vintage finds add character to the Scandi-style decor in this Finnish villa



IN THE ATMOSPHERE

A chic mix of dusky pinks and moody hues create an enchanting ambience in this Danish home

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DECEMBER

TRENDS | WHAT'S NEW | MUST-HAVE BUYS

I



2



4



5



3



6



7



8



9



IO



NORDIC WINTER

Create a winter wonderland with Scandi-inspired decorations. Mix a pale palette with natural elements and finish with a dusting of seasonal shimmer

COMPILED BY ERICA MILLER

1 ALL AGLOW

Steeple, £22, Roman at Home

2 LEADING LIGHTS

Linea white house LEDs, £25, House of Fraser

3 DASHING DEER

Reggie the reindeer tree

decoration, £4, Paperchase

4 NATURE STUDY

Heritage pine cone glass

bauble, £1, Poundland

5 FOREST GLADE

Green cone wreath with stag, £20, Dobbies

6 FROSTY FESTOON

White berry garland, £34, The Contemporary Home

7 LET IT SNOW

Flocked 6ft pre-lit downswept pine Christmas tree, £179, Very

8 CRACKLE AND POP

Luxury Silver crackers, £19.50 for six, Marks & Spencer

9 WOODLAND CHARM

Mini potted English trees, £20 for a set of three, The White Company

10 JUMP FOR JOY

Gift sack, £8.99, The Oak Room



EMBRACE TRADITION

Follow custom this Christmas, with beautiful and traditional decorations in classic shades of red and deep green, offset by glittering gold accents

1 TOUCH OF LUXURY

Limited edition Christmas wreath, £95 with the purchase of another product, Jo Malone

2 SEASONAL SHIMMER

Gold star decoration, £2, George Home

3 A WINTER'S TALE

Vinter 2015 unscented block candle, £4 for four, Ikea

4 BRIGHT BOUGHS

Pre-lit 6ft tree, £35, Tesco Direct

5 FESTIVE FLOURISH

Cone and berry garland, £30,

Wyevalle Garden Centres

6 CORGI-APPROVED

Tree decoration, £10, Highgrove

7 YULETIDE CHARM

Father Christmas metal tree decoration, £6.95, Red Lilly

8 OLD MEETS NEW

Lit cardholder tree, £12, Next

9 HOMESPUN STYLE

Fairisle crackers, £25 for six, House of Fraser

10 MERRY AND BRIGHT

Present sack, £32, At Home with Ashley Thomas at Debenhams



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Q&A

Our resident interiors expert Rachel Leedham is on hand to answer all your decorating queries

BLACK WINDSOR CHAIRS

While browsing through a Swedish interiors magazine, I spotted some simple stick back chairs in black, which would be perfect for our new dining room scheme. Can I find a design like this that's available in the UK?

JESSIE BROOM, WARWICKSHIRE

Black brings a crisp, modern edge to the classic Windsor chair. I & JL Brown (020 7736 4141, ijlbrown.com) sells a black Windsor stick back side chair with a plain leg, H98 x W46 x D45cm, £355 (pictured). Ercol (01844 271800, ercol.com) also has a simple 1877 Windsor dining chair that comes in eight finishes, including black, H89 x W49 x D53cm, £360.



CHILDREN'S ART DISPLAY

Can you tell me where Michelle Clinton found the wire lines used to hang her children's artwork (p32, May 2015 issue)?
JANIE MAHON, BY EMAIL

A metal cable you can clip paintings onto with pegs is a flexible way to showcase the work of your budding artist; at this time of year, it is also a wonderful system for displaying Christmas cards. If you wish to

install a cable between opposite walls (like an alcove), try the ceiling to floor system from Picturehanging.co.uk (020 8320 8800). A 400cm cable and fixings is £12, and you can adjust the cable length to suit your space. Ikea (020 3645 0000, ikea.com) has a curtain wire called Dignitet (pictured) that works well as a wall or ceiling-mounted option. It costs £14 for a complete set, including fittings and curtain wire measuring 500cm.

VELVET STRIPE

I'd like to reupholster my dining chairs with a striped velvet fabric that will work with dark red walls. Do you have any suggestions?
BRIGIT BEAUMONT, GUILDFORD

A dining room tends to get the most use in the evening, so it lends itself well to a rich palette such as your dark red scheme. Ian Mankin (020 7722 0997, ianmankin.co.uk) recently launched a new velvet stripe called Regency in Peony cotton, £64.50m. Other ideas are Salon Stripe viscose mix (right), £134m, Osborne & Little (020 8812 3123, osborneandlittle.com) and Chemin viscose mix (left), £200m, Fabrics & Papers (01273 495500, fabricsandpapers.com).



PLASTER CORBELS

I love the wall sconces featured in Haikje Verberk and Rik Lebouille's dining room (p65, February 2015 issue), and I wonder if you can help me to find something similar? SHEENA DOBBIE, BY EMAIL

Plaster corbels are most commonly used as decorative supports for arches, but they are also perfect for displaying ornaments, and look particularly eye-catching when clustered

together on a wall. UK Plaster (01204 693900, ukplaster.com) has a good selection of styles, including a small B2 fluted corbel (shown), H26 x W19 x D9.5cm, £20.40. The company also offers helpful advice on installing the corbel so that it is able to take the weight of an ornament. Other companies to try for a range of corbel designs are Stevensons of Norwich (01603 400824, stevensons-of-norwich.co.uk) and Plasterwrx (07973 416072, plasterwrx.co.uk).



FAUX-FUR THROW

Please can you help me to find a good quality faux-fur throw for my bedroom? The scheme features grey accents, so I'd like to find a design that tones with this palette. LILY BRADSHAW, TYNE-ON-WEAR

This is the season when a tactile faux-fur throw truly comes into its own. Cox & Cox (0844 858 0744, coxandcox.co.uk) has a luxurious long pile design that comes in five colourways – Bear, Snow Fox, Butterscotch, Wolf and Husky (I would suggest the latter two as good partners to grey

tones), 180 x 140cm, £195 each. Amara (0800 587 7645, amara.com) sells faux-fur throws by Helen Moore, which are available in nine colourways; have a look at the plain grey Opal version, 140 x 180cm, £280, or the exotic Chinchilla design, 145 x 180cm, £225.

DISPLAY DOME

When I was in a restaurant recently, I spotted a glass display dome that featured an opening in the top to showcase a plant. Have you come across one like this? GISELE HARRY, BY EMAIL

A glass cloche can elevate the most simple object into something more special, and a ventilated version will multitask as a candle holder or, as you suggest, a display for plants. Nordic House (01872 223220, nordichouse.co.uk) sells a version (pictured) that comes in two sizes: medium, H26.5 x Dia15cm, £28, and large, H35 x Dia19cm, £39. For displaying tiny plants such as miniature cacti, have a look at the Bobo mini glass cloches from Rowen & Wren (01932 847538, rowenandwren.co.uk), which come in small, H14 x Dia9.5cm, £12, or large, H24 x Dia9cm, £18.



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HALL
An imposing Christmas tree takes centre stage during the festive season. Lucie pendant light in Beeswax, £270, Jim Lawrence, is a good match



MORE THE MERRIER

Rich colours, tactile fabrics and vivid patterns are the order of the day at Riv and Marc Ahearne's house at Christmas

FEATURE MAGGIE COLVIN
PHOTOGRAPHY ROBERT SANDERSON





UNIQUE



HOME TRUTHS

THE PROPERTY

Georgian townhouse

LOCATION Sussex

ROOMS Hall, sitting room, drawing room, dining room, breakfast room, kitchen, study, utility room, four bedrooms (one en suite), two bathrooms

PURCHASED 2014

PREVIOUS PROPERTY

'Before we moved into this place, we lived in a manor house near the Sussex Downs,' explains Riv.

DINING ROOM

Full of exotic artefacts and furnishings, this scheme is a rich mix of European cultures.

Townhouse oval extending dark wood table and six Java chairs, £760, Furniture Choice, would work well here. Xylia chandelier, £1,225, The Chandelier & Mirror Company, is comparable. Walls painted in Spearmint absolute matt emulsion, £37 for 2.5 litres, Little Greene

FAVOURITE FEATURE *'The original oak beams in the sitting room make*



SITTING ROOM

This space is the perfect setting for the family to gather and open presents.

Cream signature sofa, £4,841, George Smith. Sperrin armchair in moss green crushed velvet, £689, Feather & Weave. Walls painted in Cooking Apple Green estate emulsion, £38 for 2.5 litres, Farrow & Ball

the space feel extra cosy, which is lovely at Christmas time'





KITCHEN

'The double Aga is ideal at Christmas time,' says Riv. Oval casserole dish in cerise, from £104; omelette pan in coastal blue, £82, both Le Creuset at John Lewis. China blue jacquard waffle tea towel, £7, Jan Constantine, has this look



KITCHEN

'As the units were fairly new, all we did was repaint them and add different handles,' says Riv. Units painted in Brighton intelligent matt emulsion, £43.50 for 2.5 litres; walls painted in Olive Oil absolute matt emulsion, £37 for 2.5 litres, both Little Greene

Rumour has it that Riv Ahearne has finally lost her itchy feet, because after four house moves in seven years, she has finally found her dream home. 'I'm not quite sure if my friends believe that though,' she smiles. 'I've moved so many times that I probably have a fickle reputation. But this period townhouse in Sussex stole my heart. It would be impossible to imagine falling out of love with it or finding anything better.' Judging by the perfect symmetry of its Georgian façade and the generous oak-panelled hall linked to an upstairs sitting room by a graceful sweep of stairs, it's easy to see how this striking home would have lasting appeal for Riv and her husband Marc.

'I used to sit in the coffee shop opposite, thinking what a lovely house it was,' reflects Riv. 'I never thought one day it would become ours.' Being so sought-after, the property didn't come onto the open market, but the Ahearnes heard that it was for sale and made an

offer. Once accepted, they moved in with their three sons, Roman, 22, Ivor, 21, and Theo, 9, just in time for Christmas last year.

Fortunately, the hurdles of dealing with a listed building had been skillfully negotiated by the previous owners, who had put quality first. 'Every built-in fitting was immaculately designed and each detail, even down to the door handles, had been well thought through,' explains Riv. 'So when we moved in, there was no major work to do – we just had to put our own stamp on the decor.'

'I love the Bohemian look,' states Riv, 'and I'm sure holidays in Morocco have inspired my style, along with lots of trips to France.' The proceeds of Riv's successful shopping trips, from souks in Marrakesh to secondhand markets in Normandy and antiques fairs in Sussex, give her home its vibrant character. But before she could decide where to locate her eclectic furnishings, one of Riv's first priorities was to paint the house in light, bright hues that are typical

of the south of France. 'For the dining room, I found a rich turquoise colour that has worked really well,' she says. 'Having a father who was an ardent art collector trained my eye and gave me the confidence to experiment with bold shades.' The vibrancy of this space, with its walls decorated with Moroccan national costumes and an exotic Chinese mirror, contrasts with the more restful moss-coloured scheme of the first-floor sitting room. This is where the family settles down with festive drinks and nibbles, opening presents before going to church on Christmas Day.

The kitchen units took on another tone of turquoise, inspired by the colour of some olive pots that Riv picked up in a flower

market in France, while the walls are painted in a contrasting zingy lime. Other rooms, such as the master bedroom and en suite, feature quintessentially English wallpapers in softer shades and floral patterns, giving them a slightly more relaxing feel.

Comfort and a laid-back atmosphere are important ingredients that make Riv and Marc's house a welcoming family home. 'One reason I like the place so much is because it has heart and character,' says Riv. 'All the rooms have generous proportions, so the house is brilliant for gatherings as we can fit 14 people around the dining room table. We both love throwing parties for close friends and family, and this Christmas will certainly be no exception.' 25



MASTER BEDROOM
Traditional furnishings complement this space. Colefax and Fowler Leaf Trellis wallpaper, £58 per roll, John Lewis. Curtains in Tilly Ann fabric, £44m, Ernest & Matilda



BATHROOM
Clusters of candles shed a romantic glow. Woodwork painted in Stock intelligent matt emulsion, £43.50 for 2.5 litres, Little Greene. Colefax and Fowler Berwick wallpaper, £56 per roll, John Lewis



INSPIRATION 'Holidays to the south of France have had a big influence on my interior style – I love the colours they use there'

GUEST BEDROOM
A palette of vivid colours creates a warm environment for Christmas visitors. Bedside table, £150, Sally Wells; painted in Spearmint intelligent matt emulsion, £43.50 for 2.5 litres, Little Greene. Living by Christiane Lemieux velvet chevron bedspread, £150, House of Fraser, is near-identical

COLLECTOR'S PEACE

In Lori Vidito's home, a contemporary palette and decorations inspired by nature create a tranquil space amid the winter's snow

FEATURE JENNIE FILER | PHOTOGRAPHY GAP INTERIORS/ROBIN STUBBERT



SITTING ROOM

White snowflake decorations make an instant impact against the charcoal walls.

The California three-seater rattan sofa in graphite has a similar look, £372, Tesco Direct. Try Farrow & Ball's Off-Black estate emulsion, £38 for 2.5 litres, for walls this colour. The

Litecraft Somerset three-light black chandelier is a near-match, £59, Debenhams. The Zoeppritz stripe cushion in charcoal soft fleece would suit this scheme, £55, Amara



INSPIRING

HOME TRUTHS

THE PROPERTY Detached house built in 1985

LOCATION Picton, Ontario

ROOMS Hall, sitting room, snug/kitchen-diner, cloakroom, three bedrooms, two bathrooms (one en suite), basement granny flat

PURCHASED 2009

PREVIOUS PROPERTY

'We used to have a 110-year-old farmhouse in this town,' says Lori.

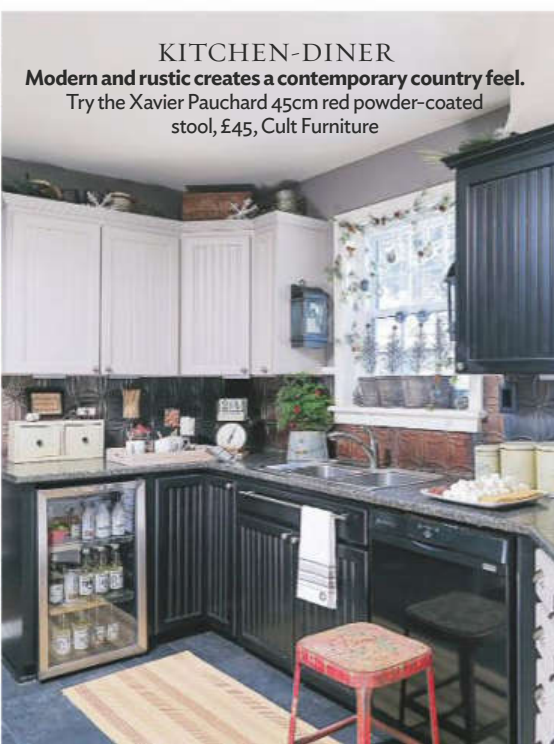
A few weeks into November, a subtle but magical change comes over the home of Lori Vidito. Sprigs of greenery clamber along the mantelpiece and up the banisters, while pinecones cluster on surfaces, and an eclectic collection of snowflakes tumble from ceilings and adorn the snow-frosted Christmas tree.

'I decorate more for winter than for Christmas,' says Lori, a hairstylist who shares her three-bedroom house with husband Mike and son Mitchell, 12. 'I begin in November and it takes a couple of weeks from start to finish.' Her hard work results in a festive atmosphere abundant in nature's bounty, but with a modern edge befitting the property's contemporary style.

Lori and Mike both grew up in the small town near the shores of Lake Ontario that they still call home, and wanted to stay there when

the time came, in 2009, to move out of their 110-year-old farmhouse. Their initial plans to build changed when an estate agent persuaded them to view a 1980s property five minutes from the town's main street. 'My husband fell in love with it straight away,' recalls Lori. 'But it needed a lot of work. It was very dated, and had to be totally remodelled. I didn't like the layout, but I knew I could turn it into a home we'd love.'

With the family renting a property nearby, three months of what Lori describes as 'chaos' got underway, as the house was renovated from top to bottom, inside out. 'It was an all-at-once job, with lots of contractors coming and going,' says Lori. 'We had the siding removed and replaced, as well as all the windows and doors. The front porch had rotted and was rebuilt, and the garden was landscaped.' Inside, the floors were replaced, hardwood stairs installed,



KITCHEN-DINER

Modern and rustic creates a contemporary country feel.

Try the Xavier Pauchard 45cm red powder-coated stool, £45, Cult Furniture



FAVOURITE ROOM

'I love how light this space is – on a bright day, the sun bounces off the silver decorations and makes the whole room sparkle'

DINING AREA

Hanging snowflakes create a wintry display. The Brocante solid mango wood dining table has this look, £498, Maisons du Monde. Litecraft Somerset five-light black chandelier would work here, £99, Debenhams. The Kaplan stripe furnishing fabric in charcoal is a match for the blinds, £25m, John Lewis



the downstairs cloakroom gutted and remodelled, gas furnaces fitted, and the kitchen updated. 'It was so hectic,' recalls Lori. 'Our project manager told us he'd never seen so many different contractors on the same project, but they worked well together.'

With the house habitable, Lori could begin to realise her vision for the decor. 'I wanted it to be calming,' she says, 'with a very relaxed contemporary country feel.' She began with the colour palette. 'I used dark and light greys and cream for a simple, monochrome look.' This colour scheme is used to striking effect in the sitting room, where cosy charcoal walls make a feature of the white tongue-and-groove chimneybreast and fireplace. Leading on from this room is the snug/kitchen-diner, where the family relax together, and which was enlivened with a striped feature wall. The open-plan space and adjacent sitting room provide an

ideal area for the Veditos' traditional Christmas Eve drinks and nibbles with family and friends. Other rooms were given a hint of colour with greens and greyish blues – this works beautifully in the hall, which boasts an imposing bench made partly from an antique door.

It's a palette that provides the perfect backdrop for Lori's winter decorations, particularly her collection of snowflakes that adorn the sitting room walls, the porch, the tree, and the windows. 'I have lots of snowflakes that I've collected and made over the years,' she explains. Elsewhere, rough-hewn logs stack up on the hearth and tendrils of greenery and natural wreaths intertwine with the fireplace, the chandeliers and the windows, resulting in a home that wakes up on November mornings to find that a little extra winter magic has been sprinkled overnight. 25

1 & 2 SNUG Closely arranged comfy chairs make this a cosy space.

Charlotte armchair upholstered in Designers Guild Foglia cut pile velvet in Zinc would work here, £1,400 each, John Lewis. Try the natural engineered-oak coffee brushed oiled flooring, £38.61sq m, Wood & Beyond

3 MITCHELL'S ROOM
Colourful furnishings in here create a lively room for Lori's son. Green Ground estate emulsion is similar, £38 for 2.5 litres, Farrow & Ball. Try the recycled cotton rag rug by Bell & Blue, £20, Notonthehighstreet.com

4 CLOAKROOM
This space has a subtle nautical feel. Giant stem wallpaper by Orla Kiely would work here, price on request, Harlequin. Try the Trevano window mirror, £185, Oka. The Hambledon raw oak towel ladder would suit this space, £90, Garden Trading



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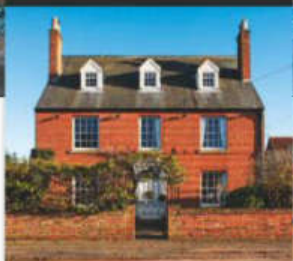
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COMFORT &

JOY

INSPIRING



HOME TRUTHS

THE PROPERTY

Farmhouse, built in mid-1700s

LOCATION Nottinghamshire

ROOMS Hall, sitting room, dining room, kitchen-diner, TV room, study, utility, five bedrooms (one en suite), two bathrooms, plus a converted two-bedroom barn

PURCHASED 1988 and 1997
PREVIOUS PROPERTY

'Before moving to this house, we renovated a Georgian townhouse in Newark,' says Karen.

Karen and Peter Moore sold their Georgian farmhouse, only to repurchase it a decade later and turn it into a welcoming, festive home

DINING ROOM

The table extends to accommodate 12 people for Christmas dinner.

Athos dining table £3,500, white leather dining chairs, £650 each, both B&B Italia. Walls painted in

Down Pipe estate emulsion, £38 for 2.5 litres, Farrow & Ball. Jena pendant has this look, £150, Bhs

FEATURE JACKY HOBBS | PHOTOGRAPHY CLIVE NICHOLS



HALL
A faux pine garland winds its way up the banister, decorated with family keepsakes.

The Midwinter faux garland is similar, £45, John Lewis. Find antique wooden sledges at Colonial Soldier, from £45



KITCHEN

This sleek and glossy monochrome scheme looks clean and bright.

Kitchen by Davenport, from £15,000. The Blade cream bar stool is similar, £85, Atlantic Shopping. Glass splashback, £400, Krantz Designs



Unusually, Karen and Peter Moore bought the same house twice, firstly to renovate, and a decade later, as their family home. The couple had an eye and the energy for restoration projects, moving from job to job before deciding to settle down in 1997, with the impending birth of their son, Charlie. 'We'd just restored a small townhouse and needed something spacious, and pushchair friendly,' says Karen.

Coincidentally, the couple's former farmhouse was back on the market. 'Curiosity or fate made us go back and look at our old home,' explains Karen, who was unprepared for the alterations made since they first lived there. 'It had been seriously gentrified,' she says, in reference to the metres of dado and picture rails. 'But we still loved it.' The

kitchen-diner, which they had originally knocked through to improve flow and light, had been boxed in again. The decor was heavy, laden with fitted pine furniture and plastered with fussy wallpaper borders. But the Moores had overcome much worse and so they moved back home.

'We found the original kitchen-diner interconnecting doors discarded in the barn so we simply reinstated them,' says Karen. The pair also ripped out the dado rails, and painted walls and doors white throughout. 'I was reluctant to make major colour decisions, as pregnancy hormones are said to cause judgemental chaos!' She was also keen to live in the house before decorating it. 'You have so many ideas initially and it's all so exciting, but it's a good idea to get used to your home.'

Deep-rooted fixtures and fittings, woodburners and the



SITTING ROOM
Neutrals shades and a touch of shine create a cosy, elegant feel.

Try the Relax sofa in Linara Silver Birch, £3,350, Amode. Cream twisted-pile rug, £4,000; Charles coffee table, £900, both B&B Italia

BATHROOM

This tranquil space is reminiscent of a boutique or spa hotel, a place to relax and unwind in.

Find a roll-top bath like this at The Cast Iron Bath Company, from £675. Bath painted in Down Pipe estate eggshell, £53 for 2.5 litres, Farrow & Ball.

Similar rattan baskets from £99, Oka



GUEST BEDROOM

Changeable soft furnishings add a splash of warmth and colour.

Vintage French bed, £150, Newark Antiques & Collectors Fair, painted in Shaded White estate eggshell, £53 for 2.5 litres, Farrow & Ball



CHARLIE'S BEDROOM

Textured wallpaper and Union Jack elements add a more masculine touch to a pale palette.

Scrapwood wallpaper by Piet Hein, £199 per roll, Bodie and Fou. Jack Wills sells Union Jack bedding sets, from £69.50



oil-fuelled Aga remained, and the new kitchen-diner evolved around them. Karen evicted the clunky pine cabinetry, making the kitchen more streamlined and simple. 'I wanted to incorporate texture into the room and fell in love with Indian slate fossil-filled floor tiles, as they're brilliant with pets, children, food and drink,' says Karen, who extended the flooring throughout the dining room and hall. With time, Karen softened the stark white base with taupe and misty grey neutrals. Influenced by travels to Japan and Indonesia, she discovered a yen for simpler, less fussy designs. 'A 200-year-old Balinese carved wooden panel, found on holiday, was the foundation for the dining room,' she explains. There, a sleek but textured table floats on chrome legs, contrasted with white leather chairs, linen curtains and

a reflective drum light fitting, which is Karen's modern take on the traditional chandelier. 'I use reflective materials to add light, glamour and a contemporary edge,' she says. 'I like mixing light with dark, using texture and sheen.' Karen and Peter have also harmonized disparate pieces of furniture with a lick of paint.

Colour and pattern are limited but are used to add interest here and there, such as in the guest bedroom, where Karen has blended Toile de Jouy with florals and checks, using a cerise and ivory base.

This time around, the house is filled with an eclectic mix of beautiful pieces – but fortunately, Karen isn't precious about them. 'It's a good thing,' she says, 'because at Charlie's last party, a candle set fire to our very expensive rug. Luckily, I managed to cut out the singed pieces, and it's now as good as new.' 25

DESIGN TIP *'Don't rush things and don't buy everything from one shop. Only live with the things you love and realise that nothing is forever'*

MASTER BEDROOM
Panelled wallpaper creates an unusual decorative effect. Georgian wallpaper, £199 per roll, Bodie and Fou. Find sisal carpeting, from £23.99sq m, at Naked Flooring Company



WHITE OUT

Pernilla Porten has created a winter wonderland in her traditional Swedish villa, using neutral decorations and adornments inspired by the great outdoors

FEATURE GEORGIE LANE-GODFREY
PHOTOGRAPHY CECILIA MÖLLER/LIVING 4 MEDIA

DINING AREA

'I love the big windows in here, with their far-reaching views across the forest,' says Pernilla. Viva Lagoon chunky reclaimed oak table, £1,670, Furnish.co.uk, is a match. Ludde sheepskin rug, £30, Ikea. Silver five-arm candelabra, £158, Brissi, is comparable



UNIQUE



HOME TRUTHS

THE PROPERTY

Single-storey villa

LOCATION

Värmland, Sweden

ROOMS Sitting room/dining room/kitchen-diner, utility room, four bedrooms, two bathrooms

BUILT 2011

PREVIOUS PROPERTY

'We lived in a large townhouse nearby prior to this,' says Pernilla.





KITCHEN-DINER
Classic white units combine with striking black fixtures for a sleek monochrome look.

Black-and-gold pendant light by Horsfall & Wright, £55, Notonthehighstreet.com, is near-identical. Small Foto pendant lamp in dark grey, £22, Ikea. Nevio black and white tufted wool rug, £129, La Redoute. Sirocco black leather corner sofa, £2,395, The English Sofa Company, has this look



FAVOURITE ROOM *'The open-plan living area is my favourite space. It's where we*

When Pernilla Porten and her husband Johan wanted to find their dream home, they knew exactly what to do – construct it themselves. 'We've always talked about building our own house,' says Pernilla, 'but it's a big step from talking about it to actually doing it.' Using Johan's parents' land in Värmland, Sweden, the couple set about creating a traditional Scandinavian villa.

The finished product is an elegant whitewashed single-storey property that provides a functional family home for their

three children, William, 12, Eddie, 9, and Annie, 5. Inside, the interior is just as stylish, combining a classic palette of monochromes with shades of grey and oatmeal to soften the overall look. Combined, it creates a feeling of continuity through the open-plan sitting room into the bedrooms. 'I enjoy the sense of space in our communal areas,' says Pernilla. 'When you have a big family, you need it!'

As for the furnishings, Pernilla turned to social media for inspiration. 'I'm a Pinterest and Instagram addict,' she says, 'both have amazing decor ideas.' One of which included

combining old with new, such as juxtaposing a Mora clock and dresser with modern black pieces, like a coat stand and rattan chair from Ikea. By mixing classic with contemporary, Pernilla has created a timeless look. 'I think it's important when you're decorating not to rush,' she says. 'You really have to live in a place first to get a feel for what you like. There's nothing wrong with experimenting with different pieces and seeing what works.'

When it comes to pulling together the scheme, Pernilla's advice is to concentrate on adding a personal touch. 'Your home is a very



eat and relax, and the children do their homework here – it's the heart of our home'



BEDROOM

Tones of grey soften this whitewashed scheme to create an inviting atmosphere.

Harlequin Drift wallpaper, £46 per roll, John Lewis, would create the same look. Albert grey cushion, £45, Beulah Home at Notonthehighstreet.com, is an alternative. Fisher wall light, £88, Jim Lawrence, suits this style



BATHROOM

Red towels bring a splash of colour.

Bam'Bou ladder towel rack by Tikamoon, £31, Wayfair, is a close match. Red luxury bath towel, £30, House of Fraser



DESIGN TIP *'Stick with a classic colour palette so it's easy to adapt to new trends – that way you don't have to keep redecorating'*

intimate, individual thing, so you should make it reflect you,' she says. 'For example, we display a lot of family pictures. But rather than hanging them all over the house, I group them together. It makes the look cleaner and more styled.' Other personal touches include bespoke furniture, like the long dining table and benches, which Johan made himself. 'It's my favourite item,' says Pernilla. 'It's special as it's totally unique to our home.'

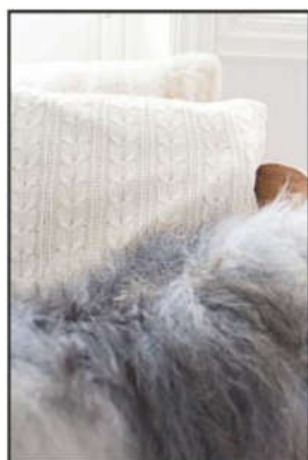
Pernilla's clean and classic look also extends to her Christmas decorations, which continue the grey and white theme. 'My

children love decorating the house, but we don't exactly have the same taste!' she laughs. 'I'm quite traditional so I always decorate my tree in the same way with white baubles.' Keeping the look understated, miniature zinc houses make charming tealight holders, while white ceramic reindeer add a festive touch.

Sheepskins dotted around the rooms provide an element of texture and warmth, while red accents, such as apples and flowers, lend a classic Yuletide edge to the monochrome palette. 'I try to bring natural elements indoors, so the red accents tend to

be flora and fauna,' says Pernilla. 'The idea to hang a branch covered in fairy lights above the table came from an interiors magazine. It makes an amazing seasonal centrepiece.'

Come Christmas Day, the branch will hang above the 20 people who the couple celebrate with. 'We spend the morning with Johan's parents,' says Pernilla. 'As they live so close, we walk over with breakfast.' After this, the family return home and Pernilla prepares a traditional Swedish feast of ham and herring. 'All the family come over and we eat around the table – it's the best part of Christmas.' 25



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Natural CELEBRATIONS

Garden designer Butter Wakefield takes her passion for botanical decor to a whole new level at Christmas

FEATURE JACKY HOBBS | PHOTOGRAPHY CLIVE NICHOLS



DISTINCTIVE

HOME TRUTHS

THE PROPERTY

A terraced Victorian villa

LOCATION West London

ROOMS Sitting room, family room, kitchen-diner, study, cloakroom, garden room, five bedrooms, two bathrooms

PURCHASED 1992

PREVIOUS PROPERTY

'We lived in a Georgian workman's cottage nearby,' says Butter.

SITTING ROOM

Greenery fills the space, both in terms of furnishings and foliage, and even the Christmas tree matches the scheme, with its neatly arranged green baubles and sheer ribbon. The occasional chair is from Myriad Antiques. For a similar striped green velvet, try Piomba Moss at Designers Guild, £68m. Walls painted in Lamp Room Gray estate emulsion, £38 for 2.5 litres, Farrow & Ball. Seagrass Herringbone flooring, £30sq m, Crucial Trading. John Lewis's organza ribbon, £4 for 5m, is comparable. The Bacall chair, £695, Andrew Martin, would work well here



FAMILY ROOM

Orchids and dried hydrangeas decorate the mantelpiece, as do the stockings, which Butter needlepointed for each of her children.

The orchid plants and dried hydrangeas are from Covent Garden flower market. Similar needlepoint kits are available from BA Barker Gifts at Etsy, from £30 each. Tobias and the Angel offers a wide selection of china planters and vessels, from £95





KITCHEN

Black-framed botanical prints cover the walls, diffusing the kitchen's functional element.

The prints are from Portobello Road Market and vintage and antiques shops, from £55. Spindle-back chairs, £295 each, Oka. Linoleum floor tiles from Sinclair Till, £49.30sq m

GARDEN ROOM

Outdoors meets indoors in this glass-encased room, which is just off the kitchen.

Sofa and cushions covered in Dragon Flower Original on Beige from Bennison Fabrics, £197m. Colefax and Fowler's Keats fabric, £82m, would recreate the look of the red velvet cushions



American-born Butter Wakefield has lived in London for over 25 years, where she has raised her four children: Zoe, Jack, Eliza and Kit. In stark contrast, she grew up on a small farm in Maryland. 'I come from a long line of very good gardeners,' explains Butter. 'So I suppose gardening is in my blood.'

Butter spent some years working as a design assistant at Colefax and Fowler, where she learnt about design, pattern, colour, texture and scale, all lessons that she has successfully brought to life in her vibrant west London home, where she has lived for more than 20 years. She also studied at The English Gardening School and now has a portfolio of clients who have fallen in love with her ability to unite home and garden. And at Christmas, her ethos is imbued in her own home, where the outside seems to spill seamlessly indoors.

'I love combining fresh flowers and foliage to decorate the house, filling it with nature's

FAVOURITE SHOP

'I am a huge fan of Tobias and the Angel. I have known Angel for years and she is a great inspiration'

perfume,' she says. 'My signature festive decorations are exuberant floral pomanders and sumptuous garlands and wreaths.'

Butter's vibrant home provides the perfect backdrop for these decorations, underpinned with all shades of green, which is her favourite colour. 'I'm obsessed with this hue, so our home is all about incorporating crisp greens in textiles, papers and paints,' she says.

The grey-painted sitting room is the perfect foil for Butter's verdant furnishings, while the entrance hall is fresh and dramatic, strikingly decorated with a leafy palm pattern, and monochrome striped and checked flooring. Butter's garden room lies directly off the kitchen. This glass-encased space 'makes you feel as if you're virtually sitting outdoors,' she smiles. 'I love nothing more than having an afternoon nap on the window seat with my border terrier, Wafer.'

During the festivities, seasonal blooms fill every room, while candles add a warming glow to the botanically themed celebrations. 'It's a magical time of year,' says Butter. 'And decorating this house is always a pleasure.'

TAKE A LOOK AT THE REST OF BUTTER'S HOME



HALL

A bold pattern combination.

Palm wallpaper, £72 per roll, Cole & Son.
Audrey Midnight stair runner, £140sq m, Crucial Trading



ZOE'S BEDROOM

A neutral backdrop lets the cushions stand out. Check out Redbubble for a wide selection of black and white floral cushions, from £12 each



MASTER BEDROOM

Hints of green create a calming space.

Wisteria Blossom fabric, £32m, Wallpaper Direct, would work well here



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REPLANNED



HOME TRUTHS

THE PROPERTY

A 17th-century former sheep barn

LOCATION Hampshire

ROOMS Hall, sitting/dining room, kitchen/breakfast room, family/TV room, mezzanine study, cloakroom, showroom, five bedrooms (three en suite), bathroom

PURCHASED 2003

PREVIOUS PROPERTY

'I lived in a tiny thatched cottage before moving here,' says Gina.

WILD & WONDERFUL

Gina Fresle's bright and welcoming barn conversion is a magnet for friends and family at Christmas time

FEATURE PAT GARRATT | PHOTOGRAPHY DAVID GILES



SITTING ROOM

This vast, open-plan space is great for festive fun and games. Try Urban Slate, £42.46sq m, Fired Earth, for similar floor tiles. Timothy Oulton Junk Art propeller coffee table, £2,700, Harrods. Reindeer skin, £135; Stag Parade large stripe cushion, £40, both House & Hound



KITCHEN/BREAKFAST ROOM

The farmhouse dining table and chairs were chosen to match the wooden beams and windows. Try the Fiddle back chair, £160 for a pair, Bell's of Suffolk. Find similar pop art-style artwork, from £55, John Lewis



Gina Fresle's stunning Hampshire barn conversion is the perfect spot for enjoying Christmas festivities with teenage daughter Mollie, and extended family. The ceilings are high enough to cope with the tallest tree, and the dining area can accommodate guests galore. 'I normally have 10 to 12 people for Christmas

lunch, so Christmas Eve is spent wrapping presents and madly preparing veg,' says Gina. 'We always have a traditional turkey, plus a goose or beef. Afterwards we play games such as charades.'

Gina admits that it was sheer inquisitiveness rather than intent to purchase that drove her to look at the property. 'Initially, I was simply being nosy,' she admits. 'I was interested because I always

enjoyed property development as a hobby. I found it relaxing compared to my old day job, which was completely unrelated.'

The derelict barn came with outline planning permission for a part-commercial business, which would enable Gina to run her homewares business, House & Hound, from home. However, there was no power in the vicinity and, when she was quoted £80,000 to bring it in, Gina decided to do it herself.

'I bought a JCB and dumper truck, and landowner agreed to let me dig a channel a mile and a half long for the cable,' she says. 'I thought, "How hard can it be?" I hit the fence a few times, and the water supply, but in the end I was a dab hand at it.' She has always been enterprising; her father is a retired builder who used to 'take me to DIY

DINING AREA
Wooden benches are softened with hides and cushions.

The teak rectangular double-extending table, £549; and 6ft backless teak bench, £139, both Patio Garden Furniture, would work well here



KITCHEN

'My dogs love the warmth from the Aga,' says Gina. 'But I don't like cooking so it is rather wasted on me!'
Bespoke units by Searle & Taylor. The Stonelustre wall tile, £5.35 each, Fired Earth, is a good alternative





SITTING ROOM

An oriental chest adds stylish storage. The Shimu double-sided black lacquer cabinet, £795, Furnish, has this look. Cowskin trunk, £295, House & Hound



MOLLIE'S BEDROOM

A cool monochrome palette creates a chic and stylish look.

Austen bed, from £2,295, And So To Bed. Fur throw, from £175, House & Hound. For similar bedding, try the Tuvbräcka range, from £15, Ikea

BEST BUY *'found the stag picture that sits over the log burner in France and now I import it along with similar canvases to sell at House & Hound in Hampshire'*



GUEST BEDROOM

Delicate shades of mauve and silvery grey lend a soft, romantic feel.

Tree of Life four-poster, from £1,625, And So To Bed. The lilac gingham duvet cover, £54 for a double, Pure Living Collection, would suit this space



MOLLIE'S EN SUITE

Original oak beams add warmth to this sleek, contemporary scheme.

The Memento basin by Villeroy & Boch, £350, UK Bathrooms, is a good match

stores as a child, and I must have caught the bug then,' says Gina. 'Even today I prefer knocking down walls to putting things together.'

With its rotten beams and chalk floor, there was little worth keeping inside the original structure, although a couple of the trusses were retained to be used decoratively. First Gina hired a team of local builders to create the internal walls, to divide the vast empty shell into a hall, kitchen/breakfast room and family room, with five bedrooms above. Then she employed local craftsman Michael Carr for the joinery. 'In previous houses I only used oak for the doors, but here I wanted all the woodwork and beams to be in oak,' explains Gina. 'Most people choose Douglas fir, which doesn't move much, but oak shifts and twists,

which is just what I wanted. It's part of the building's charm. I also put in a swimming pool but found we hardly used it so I decided to cover it over and now use the space as a showroom for my homewares business. But the pool is still underneath.'

The next stage of the development was building a spacious L-shaped glazed extension – with a soaring beamed roof – to encompass an open-plan sitting room and dining area, plus a mezzanine level. With its rustic slate-tiled floor, roaring woodburner and eye-catching oil painting of a stag, the result has the air of a medieval banqueting hall. 'But thanks to triple-glazing, underfloor heating and cosy animal hides, the interior always feels warm and full of cheer – especially at Christmas,' says Gina. 25

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KITCHENS

COOL & CRISP & EVEN

Hanna and Robert Hjort enliven their home with Christmas sparkle, adding cosy textiles, handmade decorations and garden greenery

FEATURE ISOBEL DIAMOND
PHOTOGRAPHY LIVING4MEDIA/CECILIA MÖLLER



INSPIRING



HOME TRUTHS

THE PROPERTY Detached brick house built in 1970
LOCATION Sundsvall, Sweden
ROOMS Sitting room, kitchen-diner, six bedrooms, two bathrooms, sauna, conservatory
PURCHASED 2001
PREVIOUS PROPERTY 'Before moving here, we lived in a large modern apartment, close to the city,' says Hanna.

SITTING ROOM

Textiles and fur rugs create a comfortably stylish look in this relaxed area.

Ludde white sheepskin furs, £30 each; Ektorp two-seater sofa in Blekinge white, £230, all Ikea. The LG East German spotlights have this look, £440 each, Trainspotters

DINING AREA

Fresh greenery, candles and a display of small Christmas trees transform this space for the festive season.

Icelandic off-white sheepskin rug, £140, is a good match, Nordic House. Ottava pendant lamp, £35, Ikea



To ensure their home feels cosy in the winter months, Hanna and Robert Hjort add a combination of warming textiles and natural furs. 'I love to make it really snug,' says Hanna. 'I add extra sheepskins, cushions, throws and soft fabrics, and we light our woodburning stoves.' At Christmas, Hanna injects each room with a festive look, which is inspired by her garden and the surrounding countryside. 'I use a green-and-white scheme and lots of fauna from the outdoors, such as pine cones and small spruce fir trees,' she

explains. 'I make my own decorations too – linen hearts to hang on the trees, wreaths, garlands and even stockings.' In true Swedish tradition, festivities in this house begin four weeks before Christmas. 'Our celebrations start with a special family dinner with the children,' says Hanna, who has a daughter Leia, 13, and son Neo, 11. 'We decorate the table in the conservatory, which has glorious views of the landscape and we light candles in my handcrafted driftwood candleholders.'

A shared passion for house renovation and furniture-making inspired Hanna and

Robert to modernise and restyle a run-down detached property into a spacious family home. 'We loved the idyllic location, near a pretty little village, and the house had huge potential,' says Hanna. 'When we moved in, it was all very dated. The basement was filled with sand, which we had to clear to make it into a sitting room. We didn't use an interior designer, we created the look ourselves.'

Hanna and Robert are a hands-on couple. They have created a bespoke scheme for their house using handmade wooden furniture and accessories. 'We make a lot of



DECORATING TIP *'At Christmas, think about scents as well as visuals. I add cinnamon and pine to my homemade decorations'*



MASTER BEDROOM
Wool throws and crisp cotton sheets look soothing against the white palette.

For a similar throw try the Lille collection, £130, The White Company. Recreate the look with Wimborne White estate emulsion, £38 for 2.5 litres, Farrow & Ball, on walls

pieces, using my designs,' says Hanna. 'We buy wood, or use recycled timber and have turned the garage into a workshop. I love the stairs to the lower-ground-floor sitting room, which were crafted by a carpenter.' This special staircase has treads that appear to float from the wall. 'We also made the kitchen island and it's my favourite piece,' says Hanna. 'It gives the room a focal point.'

Throughout the year, but especially in the colder months, Hanna and her family enjoy their sauna. 'I'm originally from Finland and a Finnish person needs a

sauna,' says Hanna. 'Ever since I moved out of my parents' home, I wanted my own. On Christmas Eve, when my extended family come to visit, we all take a sauna together.'

Hanna and Robert have spent lots of time and attention on their garden to transform it into an extension of their home. 'We grow vegetables and herbs, and some fruit and berries, too. Most of the flowers are white, so I guess you could call it a white garden,' she says. 'In winter, it freezes over and the twigs turn white with frost. For me, that's when it really comes to life.' 25

I KITCHEN

Contemporary and rustic styles mix here, and the white units contrast beautifully with the oak worktop and brown tiles.

For similar units try white Ringhult door, from £22 each; Lansa stainless steel handle, £4.50 for two, both Ikea. Kitchen island, £650, Live with Wood, is a good match

2 BATHROOM

The freestanding bath and wooden towel rail look striking against plain white tiles.

Satin white wall and floor tiles, £24.75sq m, Topps Tiles, would work here. Cooke & Lewis Duchess oval freestanding bath, £378, B&Q, would suit this scheme

TAKE A LOOK AT THE REST OF HANNA AND ROBERT'S HOME





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LIBRARY

'Passers-by who look through the window might well think this room is a Dickensian film set!' says Sophie. Cesario damask wallpaper, £58 per roll, Colefax and Fowler, would fit in well here. Drum lampshades, from £40 each, Where Did You Get That Light?



SITTING ROOM

The family decorate their tree with vintage and homemade baubles.

Tristan Antique gilt mirror, £325, Alexander & Pearl, has a similar look

PAST PERFECT

When Sophie Cameron moved into her husband Andrew's family home, she loved its elegance and charm so much, she decided to retain its character – and simply update it

FEATURE PAT GARRATT | PHOTOGRAPHY DAVID GILES

DINING ROOM

This elegant area is perfect for Christmas entertaining.

Walls and panelling painted in String estate emulsion, £38 for 2.5 litres, Farrow & Ball.

Lismore white wine glasses, £90 for set of two, Waterford Crystal, are a good match



SITTING ROOM

Even with high ceilings and elaborate plaster work, this space has a cosy feel.

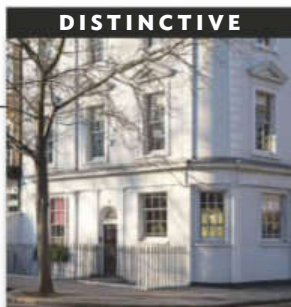
Selling Antiques has shield-back hall chairs, £225 each. India Jane sells decorative ceramic lamp bases, £89 each



FAVOURITE ROOM *'I love the amazing views from the sitting room, and I also adore our kitchen because, although it's small, it has been well designed and has a very distinctive look'*



DISTINCTIVE



HOME TRUTHS

THE PROPERTY

Victorian Grade II-listed, end-of-terrace

LOCATION Central London

ROOMS Hall, sitting room, dining room, kitchen, study, library, utility room, cloakroom, playroom, five bedrooms (one en suite), two bathrooms, dressing room, studio

PURCHASED 1999

PREVIOUS PROPERTY

'I lived in a flat in north London before Andrew and I got married and moved here,' says Sophie.



KITCHEN

Plenty of storage has been fitted into this compact space.

Bespoke furniture, all Tobias and the Angel; painted in Buckingham eggshell, £27.65 for 2.5 litres, Leyland Trade

Despite living in the heart of London, Sophie Cameron, her husband Andrew and children Louis, 15, Alfie, 13, Magnus, 11, and Rose, 9, celebrate Christmas in a village-like atmosphere. 'We walk to our local church on Christmas Day because the children's school is connected to it,' says Sophie, 'then we usually have our close family around for lunch.' With up to 16 to cater for, Sophie hires an extra-large table and it's Andrew who cooks the traditional meal of roast turkey with trimmings.

Perhaps the house lends itself so well to entertaining such large numbers because it was formerly a pub, The City of Gloucester, regularly frequented by the Chelsea Pensioners from the nearby Royal Hospital. 'Andrew's family bought the property in the early 1950s from the architect who had converted it into a house and office,' says Sophie. 'Then when Andrew's parents moved out of London to the country, we moved in here.' The property needed no structural alterations, but there was building work to be done, as the couple decided to convert the basement into a self-contained flat to rent out.

KEEPING IN CHARACTER

As it's on the corner with windows on three sides, the house is gloriously light with views over trees and playing fields. At the heart of the home is the kitchen, which is almost Victorian in appearance. 'People can't understand how I can feed six people in this little kitchen,' says Sophie. 'But it works well and it would be a real shame to change its character with a contemporary makeover.'

Nevertheless, Sophie, who makes lampshades for her company, Where Did You Get That Light?, has strong design skills and realised that the existing 1970s laminate kitchen units weren't really appropriate for such a gracious old house. In their place she commissioned solid, painted wood units and a matching table.

BALANCING ACT

The new kitchen doesn't boast all the expected mod cons. There are no soft-close drawers, pop-up electric sockets or boiling-water taps. But there is a Belfast sink, a large range cooker and floor-to-ceiling cupboards, all of which evoke the upstairs-downstairs charm of the Victorian era. 'We also chose old-fashioned lino for the flooring as it's hard wearing and feels warm underfoot,' says Sophie. Elsewhere Sophie replaced old cream carpets with sisal 'because it looks informal and disguises any marks,' and hung new curtains and blinds at several windows.

The couple were happy to inherit some beautiful pieces of furniture, such as the antique sofa in the sitting room, now upholstered in a vintage fabric. Above it hangs a French mirror, and each December a host of Victorian paper angels flutter round the frame, in keeping with this traditional, but informal, family home at Christmas.

'It's hard to get the balance right with an elderly house like this,' says Sophie. 'I wanted any improvements to be appropriate to its age, yet still feel youthful.' 25



MASTER BEDROOM
The pale green palette keeps the room looking light and fresh. Antique Rose Bouquet bedspread, £145, Cath Kidston, is comparable



EN SUITE
Eye-catching wallpaper makes a bold statement. Try The Original Morris & Co for William Morris archive wallpapers, like this, from £47 per roll



ROSE'S BEDROOM
Tall ceilings provide plenty of room for fun wall art. Aniworld sells similar paper lampshades, from £5



STUDIO
Sophie's office has doors onto a sunny terrace. Dublin oak and glass table, £375, Habitat, is a match. White lamp base, £160, Where Did You Get That Light?

Reasons to be CHEERFUL

Jessica and James Bradford added plenty of homespun touches and hand-sewn accessories to their new home for a seasonal look

FEATURE MAXINE BRADY | PHOTOGRAPHY JONATHAN JONES

INSPIRING



HOME TRUTHS

THE PROPERTY

Mid-terrace, built in 1900

LOCATION Haywards Heath

ROOMS Sitting room, kitchen, dining room, cloakroom, three bedrooms (one en suite), bathroom

PURCHASED 2012

PREVIOUS PROPERTY

'We used to live in a two-bedroom flat in Brighton,' says Jessica.

DINING ROOM

'So far, we've had three family Christmases in this house, with grandparents and aunts squeezed around the table,' says Jessica.

For similar chairs try the Agnes dining chairs, £242 for two, Wayfair. Try Giddy Goat Furniture for a sideboard like this, price on request





SITTING ROOM
Jessica keeps this space tidy with large toy boxes and baskets hidden beside the sofa.
 Hertford upholstered sofa, £1,300; awning stripe curtains, £150, both Laura Ashley

FAVOURITE ROOM *'We love the open-plan kitchen, dining and living area - it's great for special occasions like Christmas when we have our family all together'*



KITCHEN
Blue tones have been added here to coordinate with the rest of the house.
 Morphy Richards Accents kettle in cyan, £40, Debenhams. French country small dresser is similar, £1,120, The Orchard Furniture at Notonthehighstreet.com



BATHROOM

The chest is a junk-shop find that's been given a fresh coat of paint. Quickstep Tila black slate-effect flooring, £18sq m, B&Q. The Provencale ivory sideboard is a match, £900, Laura Ashley



BEDROOM

For a calming mood, Jessica opted for a cream suite with a French look and pops of blue. Isabella Ivory bed, £425, Next. Pack of 20 knobs, £57.50, These Please. Walls painted in Clunch estate emulsion, £38 for 2.5 litres, Farrow & Ball



DECORATING TIP *'I don't tend to like colour on walls so, instead, I add interest to my home with accessories and painted furniture'*



When Jessica Bradford and her husband James bought this Victorian terrace three years ago, it proved the perfect backdrop to test out their craft and decorating skills. 'We had been living in a two-bed flat, but we were keen to move to somewhere bigger as we had so many ideas of what we wanted to do,' says Jessica. 'We loved the unconventional layout of this house and wanted to emphasise its character,' says Jessica. 'But the upstairs had been painted pink, purple and orange, with a bold graffiti mural in the attic, and the downstairs walls were a coffee colour – so we had a lot of painting to do at first.'

As soon as they moved in, the couple began tackling the open-plan living, dining and kitchen area. Luckily, they got all the decorating done just in time for Christmas. 'It was our son Tom's first Christmas, and I made paper chains, borrowed a tree from my mother and put fairy lights up,' says Jessica. 'I used my best china, and filled crystal vases, given to us for our wedding, with baubles for the table. 'We had family over for lunch but didn't have enough chairs, so we borrowed garden furniture from our neighbours.'

Since then, Jessica has bought a large dining table and more chairs, and has been slowly buying furniture for the family, which

has now expanded to include a recent addition, William, now six months. 'We came from a small flat so we didn't have a lot,' says Jessica. 'I've shopped around for bargains, picking up old furniture in junk shops and online, and giving them a new look with a lick of paint. As our needs have changed, I've sold furniture we no longer needed, then used the money to buy alternatives that work better.'

Gradually growing in confidence with her handy-craft skills, Jessica joined a local sewing group in the town. 'I was looking for a hobby and a way to meet new people in the area,' she explains. 'My friend suggested the sewing group and it was great to make things from scratch.' Now, a self-confessed sewing fanatic, Jessica has made lots of soft furnishings for her home. 'My first big project was an oilcloth blind for the bathroom,' she says. 'I've also made quilts for the boys, bunting, cushions, throws, curtains and presents for family and friends. It's good fun and it saves us money, too.'

As Christmas approaches, Jessica loves to make seasonal things for her home. 'Every year I make something new,' she says. 'Last time it was stockings with the boys' names on them, and this year, I've made a Nordic-style table runner. I love being able to make and sew things that our family can share for years to come.' 25

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HOME TRUTHS

THE PROPERTY

Detached 1930s house

LOCATION

Bennekom, Netherlands

ROOMS Hall, sitting room, drawing room, kitchen-diner, utility room, cloakroom, three bedrooms, bathroom

PURCHASED 2008

PREVIOUS PROPERTY

'We used to live in a flat over our shop nearby,' says Wulf.

SILVER LININGS

An atmospheric mix of wintry textures and natural foliage brings out the festive beauty of Wulf van de Pol's Dutch home

FEATURE JO LEEVERS | **PHOTOGRAPHY** COCOFEATURES/ANNEKE GAMBON



SITTING ROOM

Tones and textures drawn from nature feel both luxurious and comforting.

Similar large bench, £160, Lovely & Co. Alfies Antique Market stocks chandeliers in this style, from £450.

The Stella sofa in brushed linen cotton, £1,440, Sofa.com, is a good match. For creative wreaths, from £90, try Wild At Heart



KITCHEN

A gilt mirror adds a luxe touch here.

The Vintage Trader specialises in mirrors like this, starting at around £450. For cabinetry in a similar style, try British Standard by Plain English, from £410 for a floor unit



There's not a glittery bauble or string of tinsel in sight, but Wulf van de Pol's home feels surprisingly festive, thanks to his talent for combining natural textures.

A silver-frosted air of nostalgia envelops this Dutch

village hideaway in a style that harks back to the property's 1930s roots – yet the house still has a contemporary feel. 'Mixing traditional surfaces is a big part of my look,' explains Wulf, an interior designer. 'So I have set lustrous and velvet fabrics beside rough, natural linen and a sleek bench against



SITTING ROOM

Earthy tones soften and unite the strong monochrome elements. New York armchair, £998, Graham and Green, is a close match. Cabinet, £1,400, Tine K Home at Mink Interiors, is comparable. Find stunning statement candleholders, from £28, at Nordic House



DINING AREA

The brick floor, generous table and foliage displays lend an almost medieval air here. Flamant Tunna dining table, £2,055, Houseology. Quirky Interiors sells a similar rustic stool, £150 each. The William at Dining Chair Company, £619, is a good match



HALL

An abundance of ferns and seedpods create a focal point. Quirky Interiors will make a bench like this, from £175. The painting is by Berthe van de Brink – find fun cow prints in a range of sizes, from around £14.99, at WorldGallery.co.uk

an old teak table. The overall air is warm and cosy, yet fresh.'

Wulf and his partner John van Remmerden also run two flower shops, so many of the textures that Wulf draws on are from the world of nature. Fabrics are chosen in hues of birch-bark silver, icy greys and bracken browns, while branches of honesty, with their silken pockets, match the silk-threaded wallcoverings. Elsewhere sofas and wooden stools are draped in fur pelts, and wreaths are fashioned from fragile ferns, crisp moss and seedpods, while taxidermy doves and ducks add wild Narnia-like touches. 'Our

from the floor up. 'Surfaces are important,' he says. 'Once the flooring feels right, it sets the tone for the rest of the room.'

Next Wulf added some large antique and vintage pieces of furniture, and then came the foliage and dried flowers that add so much atmosphere. He's a great admirer of winter foliage. Roses and soft-hued blooms provide colour, but most of his Christmas displays consist of cascades of bare twigs and sculptural pods. And, just as in nature, Wulf's arrangements surprise and delight at every turn. 'Flower arranging can work to the same principles as interior design,

DECORATING TIP

'Christmas brings an extra layer of decoration, so pare back your usual ornaments and let seasonal arrangements work their magic'

birds are loved by some and hated by others,' says Wulf, 'but we think they add character.'

Wulf and John have lived in this house since 2008. 'We spent three months reworking it to our taste, taking care to evoke its origin but adding elements that are very now,' explains Wulf. So while converting the garage into the new kitchen, they retained the original cobbled floor. Also the wallpaper was stripped away but the walls were then painted with an old-fashioned lime-based paint, to evoke a period setting.

The 'bones' of the house were important to Wulf. 'Several ceilings had been lowered so we removed the panelling and discovered more of the house's original beauty,' he says. The rough bricks and deep sheen of the Belgian bluestone floors are intrinsic to the new look – Wulf is a firm believer in decorating

centred around texture and colour,' says Wulf. 'And I think Christmas is the perfect time to bring the love of nature and the seasons inside the home.'

Antique textures such as foxed mirror glass and bleached wood are the perfect partners for the silvery natural foliage and bark. 'Vintage and antique pieces can bring a genuine warmth to a home,' claims Wulf, who loves to create small arrangements in nooks in every room. 'Working in small areas, I like to repeat colours for a sense of harmony.'

As he runs his own designer company, Violier At Home, Wulf has an open house for customers every Saturday, but at Christmas he happily closes the doors to the flow of admiring clients. 'After the hectic Christmas rush, it feels good to relax at home, stay cosy and share meals,' he says, smiling. 'After all, it's the simple pleasures in life that really matter.' 25



STAIRCASE

A line of planters makes for an effective Christmas welcome.

Find similar birch planters, from £1, Britannia Direct. Ikea's Galej tealight holders, £1 for four, would work well on the stairs

BATHROOM

Mineral shades help create a refreshing bathing space.

Calife vanity unit, £1,822, Flamant. The tiles are Belgian bluestone, £93.60 sq m, Alistair Mackintosh



MASTER BEDROOM

Layering silk against rougher linen will add texture.

Try Luxdeco for equivalent cushions, from £30. Loaf sells similar headboards, from £345



SITTING ROOM
This cosy space is ideal for curling up in front of the fire. Platner coffee table, £1,440, Aram. *Between Heaven and Hell* artwork by Gerard Hemsworth, price on application. Christmas tree from John Lewis, prices from £40. Cox & Cox's aged metal candlesticks are similar, £20 each



NEW-BUILD

HOME TRUTHS

THE PROPERTY Victorian terraced house with a modern double-height glass extension
LOCATION South London
ROOMS Sitting room, family room/kitchen-diner, cloakroom, three bedrooms (one en suite), dressing room, bathroom
PURCHASED 2010
PREVIOUS PROPERTY 'Before this place, we lived together in a flat,' says Hannah.

A NEW LIGHT

For their first Christmas in this house, Hannah Jefferson and Richard Joseph have used lavish decorations to add cosiness to a bright, double-height glass space

FEATURE MORAG BRUCE | PHOTOGRAPHY MEL YATES



SITTING AREA

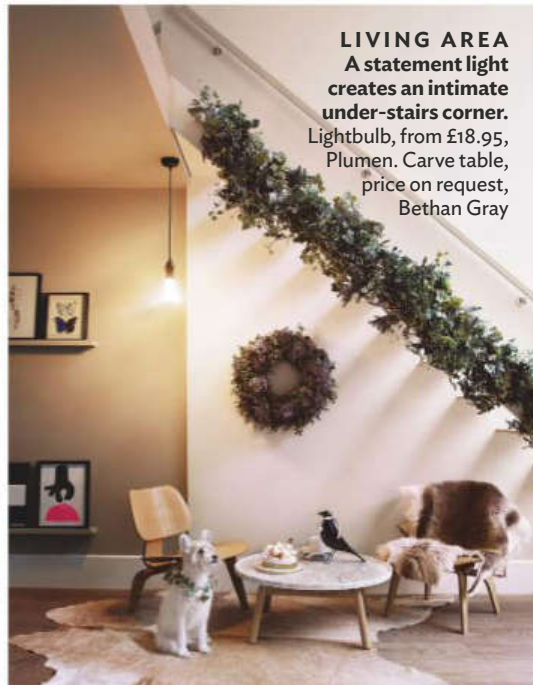
A sofa layered with hides and cushions marks off the living area of this open-plan space. Bespoke kitchen by Jack Trench. Reindeer hides, £195 each, Cox & Cox. Photographic cushions, from £12 each, Marks & Spencer



KITCHEN

On the island, smoked glass doors slide back to reveal a sound system connected to wireless speakers throughout the house.

For similar stools try the Orson design, £89 each, Swoon Editions. Selene pendant lights, from £470, Aram



LIVING AREA

A statement light creates an intimate under-stairs corner. Lightbulb, from £18.95, Plumen. Carve table, price on request, Bethan Gray



DINING AREA

'Even in this modern space, we wanted a big, traditional table,' says Richard. Vitra Eames DSW chairs, £332 each, Heal's

We're going all-out on Christmas this year,' says Hannah Jefferson. 'And we've got some really amazing decorations,' chips in her partner Richard Joseph. The couple's excitement about the festive season is partly down to it being their first in their new home, which they spent a year designing and building, but also due to having a place to celebrate in at all. This time last year, Richard could only ask, 'Where has our house gone?'. The answer was 'in several skips' – all that was left of the Victorian terrace he and Hannah had bought was the façade.

The couple hadn't undertaken anything as ambitious as this before, but then they saw this house and Richard's design genes kicked in. Not only is he one half of kitchenware company Joseph Joseph with his twin brother, but his mother and siblings are all architects or product designers. 'It was only a matter of time before I tackled a big project,' he says.

And big it was – all of the original structure was ripped out. The excavation took two months, and was completed by hand, as diggers couldn't access the rear. Working with ADE Architecture and designer Emily Cove, foundations were laid, pillars built, then six-metre glass doors installed. 'They were lifted in by crane, and we had to shut the road,' says Hannah. 'I watched from behind my hands.'

With walls in place, room building began. 'The first floor originally had two bedrooms, but we decided to create one master bedroom, dressing room and bathroom suite instead,' says Hannah. When it came to the decor, the couple wanted to bring warmth and luxury to the contemporary, glass-box extension. 'While the architecture is new and minimal, we preferred a softer look for the interior,' says Richard. As such, the new-build features period coving, ceiling roses, Victorian bathroom fittings from salvage yards and a traditional dining table. A Scandi-style palette creates a backdrop for antique furniture covered in smart tweeds, and sparkling chandeliers.

This winter, with candles lit, and the kitchen island serving as a cocktail-mixing station, Hannah and Richard are throwing open their doors. 'We're having a massive party – we want to fill the space and really see what it can do,' says Hannah. 'It feels so warm and welcoming here and I hope our guests enjoy it, too.'



BATHROOM
The bath, basin, mirror and brassware are reconditioned antiques. The Shakespeare roll-top tub is like this one, £249, Victoria Plum

FAVOURITE FEATURE *'I love the drama of the antique bed in our bedroom. By having room to breathe, it makes even more of a statement'*



MASTER BEDROOM
'Having a walk-in wardrobe means we can keep the bedroom quite free of furniture, which I find very restful,' says Hannah.
Original BTC Hector wall lights, £119 each; faux-fur cushions, from £15, all John Lewis. Purple velvet throw is similar, £120, Debenhams

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SNUG

'Above the fireplace is my favourite painting,' says Andrew. 'It looks like William IV of Orange.'
Chantal armchair, £885, Oka. The Real Rug Company sells kilims, from £200

INSPIRING



HOME TRUTHS

THE PROPERTY

Red-brick terrace, built in 1820

LOCATION Wiltshire

ROOMS Sitting room, kitchen-diner, snug, study, three bedrooms (one en suite), bathroom

PURCHASED 1997

PREVIOUS PROPERTY

'Before living here, my home was a rented house in a nearby village,' says Andrew.

HOME FOR CHRISTMAS

Andrew Halsey's love of the festive season prompted him to find a new property that would be perfect for entertaining

FEATURE SEÁN O'CONNELL | PHOTOGRAPHY DI LEWIS



KITCHEN-DINER

An artificial chimney breast was created to house the range cooker.

Bespoke cabinetry, Devizes Fine Kitchens. Sandstone flooring, from £39sq m, Artisans of Devizes



Andrew Halsey's idea of a homely house is one that looks its best at

Christmas, and he believes he has discovered the perfect place. When Andrew felt the time had come to move out of a rental and into his own property, he realised he couldn't afford to buy in the Wiltshire village he had grown to love, and widened his search to a town a few miles away.

'I found a Grade II listed terrace that had everything I was looking for,' says Andrew. 'It was in the perfect spot overlooking a green, it had a big back garden and off-street parking, which was important.'

First impressions inside the house weren't quite so

favourable, though. What Andrew found when he entered the property was a narrow hall leading to two reception rooms – both of which were darker than he had expected. The next floor up held two bedrooms and above that was a gloomy bedroom – the layout was just as it had been in Victorian times.

The property had been on the market a while and now Andrew could see why, but unlike many of its previous viewers, he had a clear idea of how he could transform the place. 'Being a picture framer, I'd like to think I have a good eye for the visual,' he says.

After making an offer the same day, Andrew quickly found himself to be the lucky owner of the house and soon after, he and his Jack Russell,



SITTING ROOM

'There's nothing like a real fire to create a festive atmosphere,' says Andrew.

For antique wooden fireplaces try Charles Graham, price on request. Take a look at the Gisela Graham twig and red berry heart wreath, £35, Number One Interiors



**MASTER BEDROOM**

The back walls were kept bare to provide a feeling of warmth. The Victoria nickel bed frame, £325 for a double, Sleepand Beds, is similar. Picture framed by QED Framing

EN SUITE

This is Andrew's secret sanctuary. Milano double-ended slipper bath, £349, Big Bathroom Shop. The Lloyd Pascal two-drawer unit, £55, Leekes, is comparable

**DECORATING TIP**

'Don't be discouraged by all the work, it's always worth it in the end'

Betty, moved in. The first change he made was a drastic one – the hall wall came down to create a large, light-filled sitting room. Apart from the much-needed decorating of certain rooms, another pet project was Andrew's meticulous restoration of the original sitting room fireplace.

Despite being a little poky, the kitchen was something Andrew was happy to live with until the time was right to enlarge it. 'This didn't happen till 10 years after I moved in, when I added a rear extension,' he says. 'To keep the original feel and character of the place, we even reused the bricks from the walls we knocked down.' In his quest for as much light as possible, he installed skylights plus French windows

that overlook the garden he takes so much pride in.

A fresh feel was a priority upstairs, too, and in bedrooms this was achieved largely by using bright furnishings, while the top-floor en suite has been painted in a pale, tasteful palette. Here, as in the rest of the house, Andrew was determined to have decor that reflected the age of the building. 'Many pieces were bought at local second-hand and antiques shops,' he says. 'But I'd like to think that even the new items are in keeping with the spirit of the place.'

Creating this cosy, stylish retreat is a dream come true for Andrew, and the highlight of his year is spending Christmas with family and friends in the homely house he has created. 25

**LOFT BEDROOM**

The half-tester over the bed was made by hanging old Flemish tapestries.

Green bed throw, from a selection, at Shamrock Linens. Walls and ceiling painted in Pale Hound estate emulsion, £38 for 2.5 litres, Farrow & Ball

WINTER wonderland

Christina Thorbøll and Niels-Henrik Hansen transformed a run-down woodland property into a magical and inviting home

FEATURE KATHY HURST | PHOTOGRAPHY NEW STYLE INTERIORS

INSPIRING



HOME TRUTHS

THE PROPERTY

Detached villa, built in 1907

LOCATION Near Copenhagen

ROOMS Hall, sitting room, dining room, kitchen, snug, library, utility room, cloakroom, eight bedrooms, two bathrooms, basement guest suite

PURCHASED 1998

PREVIOUS PROPERTY

'We used to live in an apartment nearby,' says Christina.

SITTING ROOM

White walls make a striking backdrop for Christina's rustic, off-beat Christmas decorations.

Aissa sofa, £1,240, Sofa.com, would suit this space. Walls painted in Strong White estate emulsion, £38 for 2.5 litres, Farrow & Ball. Find wooden hanging stars, £7 each, at The 5 Quarters



HALL

Comfy chairs here turn an often overlooked area into a welcoming space.

The Snowdrop armchair, from £510 each, Sofa.com, is similar to these. The black Forså work lamp is a match, £15, Ikea



DINING ROOM

Mid-Century furniture and a neutral palette create a relaxing, pared-back feel.

Hans Wegner CH 20 chair, £482, Twentytwentyone, is alike. Six-light pendant chandelier, £299, Harvest Moon, is comparable

Step inside Christina Thorboll and Niels-Henrik Hansen's home, nestled in a snowy forest outside Copenhagen, and you're met by the sound of a crackling open fire. Garlands of fairy lights are suspended around door frames, candles twinkle and glitter-sprinkled fir cones are clustered on tabletops. 'Our Christmas is very traditional,' says Christina. 'We'll light the fire, burn tealights and decorate the tree with things the children have made at school – it never looks too curated or coordinated.'

When Niels-Henrik first moved into the house, it was a far cry from the welcoming family home it is now. Floors were covered in linoleum, woodwork plastered in layers of paint, and most of the

elegantly proportioned rooms divided by partition walls. 'It used to be a care home and had a very institutional feel: there were showers in nearly every room,' says Christina, who has lived here since 2006.

The house was built in the early 20th century as a summer retreat for a wealthy shipping merchant, and the couple aimed to restore it to its former glory. Stud walls were removed, the dated kitchen ripped out, the floor repaired and woodwork repainted. 'There are some beautiful period features: high ceilings, original floorboards and ornate cornicing,' says Christina. 'It was constructed with real craftsmanship – when we asked a specialist to inspect the roof he said it would last another hundred years.' Today, white walls





KITCHEN

Painting the ceiling and walls in a dark, moody shade has a cocooning effect.

The Shaker cabinets from John Lewis of Hungerford, from £15,000, is an ideal match for this scheme. Kartell Bourgie table lamp, £211, John Lewis. Railings estate emulsion, £38 for 2.5 litres, Farrow & Ball, is a similar blue-black wall paint



DINING ROOM

A black table and chairs make for an arresting monochromatic look.

Vitra Eames DSR chairs, £225, Utility Design. Giant black industrial pendant light, £195, NuCasa



DESIGN TIP 'Introduce candlelight for atmosphere and a warm, cosy glow – perfect at Christmas as the nights draw in and the sunlight fades'



LIBRARY

'The sofa has been with me for over 20 years,' says Christina. 'It's so comfy.' Leon three-seater sofa in chilli brushed linen cotton, £1,340, Sofa.com, is comparable. For cushion covers like these, from £35, try Oka

maximise the feeling of light and space, and the couple's collection of old and new furniture lends a cosy, lived-in feel. 'I prefer sourcing second-hand pieces,' says Christina. 'Our vintage Eames chairs have a gorgeous worn patina and the glass-topped table in the library was made by my father-in-law.' Bedrooms are styled simply in a restrained off-white palette, and the hall, with its glazed archway and linen armchairs, extends a laid-back welcome. Throughout the house, bold monochrome fittings and furniture make striking focal points against the bright, white backdrop.

'I like to use a vibrant shot of colour to lift a scheme,' says Christina. In the kitchen, solid-wood cabinetry has been painted grey-green, a subtle reference to the property's woodland setting, and

paired with an oiled butcher's block worktop. Chalky white panelling gives the space a rustic air, while the walls and ceiling are painted a contrasting dark grey shade. 'It gives the room a very intimate feel,' she explains. Friends often congregate in the couple's kitchen over the festive period, where zinc stars and Christmas figures are propped up at windows and on shelves, and fluted glass pendants emit a soft, shimmering glow. 'Invariably we'll set the table in the dining room but will end up in here, squeezed around the table,' says Christina.

Come Christmas Eve, the family gathers for a feast before retiring to the sitting room for songs around the tree and gift-giving. 'Christmas Day itself is a time for lounging in our pyjamas and reading books – eating leftovers and indulging in family time.' 25



BATHROOM

Black and white striped wallpaper makes a bold statement.

Ralph Lauren's Spalding Stripe wallpaper, £47 per roll, Designers Guild, is just like this one. Victorian 560 basin, £129; Savoy pedestal, £60, both Bathstore, are a match



MASTER BEDROOM

The four-poster bed is the focal point in this pared-back scheme.

Keraton carved four-poster bed, £1,995 for a king size, Lombok, has this look

Insight

HOW TO RESTORE WOODEN FLOORS

Inspired by Christina Thorbøll's floor and want to learn about reviving hardwood boards. See our tips

Exposed hardwood is a beautiful, versatile and durable flooring option. While Christina chose a natural finish, varnishes, stains, waxes, oils and paints can create a range of looks to match the style of any home and will protect the floor from damage.

A perfect finish

Reviving wood floors and ensuring they stay looking good involves restoration, treatment and maintenance. Floorboards require a different approach to parquet. Boards are tougher and will need to be sanded using the correct equipment, which can be hired, though a professional can undertake repairs and replacements. For parquet, it's crucial to enlist professionals to restore the flooring because of the intricate detail and fitting of the panels.

A suitable treatment will protect the wood and reduce staining and moisture penetration. Oil, wax and varnish all offer high levels of protection. When choosing a treatment, consider the final finish and the desired look you want to achieve.

Tip-top condition

Choosing the correct finish for hardwood can complete and complement the overall style of your home. Natural varnishes, oils and waxes will keep its original colour. Decorative finishes, including tinted varnishes, stains and paints will change the hue of the timber. Bleaching with a chemical solution will lighten the wood, while floor paints create striking effects, from white Scandi-style boards to brighter colours for fun spaces. Farrow & Ball's eggshell floor paint is available in its full paint range. Distressing will make the floor appear aged, which works well in older properties or for a shabby chic look. It's achieved by painting, sanding or scratching the wood, before staining and sealing.

Wood flooring needs to be maintained by re-oiling, re-varnishing or lightly sanding annually or every few years, depending on the finish and level of wear. Brushing, mopping and hoovering with a brush attachment should be carried out on a regular basis. Specialist cleaning products will remove any ingrained dirt and grime.



PROFESSIONAL ADVICE

'Where individual floorboards or sections of parquet are damaged beyond repair, a professional flooring company can source reclaimed pieces with the same patina as the originals. This is a much better option than using a stain to try and match up the varying colours of different timbers.'

When selecting a final finish, it is worth considering the foot traffic and usage of the space. Varnish is recommended in a standard domestic situation. If you have wooden floors in a kitchen-diner where there is heavier traffic and footfall, oil would be preferable as it is a little more hardwearing. This finish however, does require slightly more maintenance and you will need to re-oil the boards approximately once per year.

The main advantage of using oil and wax over varnish and floor paint is that light sanding and retouching can be carried out, rather than having to fully sand all the boards back to bare wood again.

Wooden floors look beautiful, but it's very important to remember that while they are low maintenance, they are not maintenance-free and still require regular care and attention.'

DAVID BROCK, THE NATURAL FLOOR COMPANY

ADDRESS BOOK

■ Joanna Wood 020 7730 5064, joannawood.co.uk

Interior designer with expertise in property restoration, including flooring

■ Victorian Woodworks 020 7730 6957, victorianwoodworks.co.uk

Specialist suppliers of reclaimed and antique timber floors, offering design and installation

■ *Flooring: The Essential Source Book for Planning, Selecting, and Restoring Floors* by Elizabeth Wilhide, £23, Ryland Peters & Small
Tips on selecting flooring with guides on installation, safety, care and maintenance



Painted boards add a rustic touch to this living room

Wooden flooring is a practical choice in this busy area

Treads and risers in a painted finish create a modern look



EXPERT EYE 'Oils and waxes are pleasing to the eye, giving a soft sheen. I also love using paint as it allows you to create unique details, such as borders and stencils, but it is harder to maintain'

JOANNA WOOD, INTERIOR DESIGNER & FOUNDER OF JOANNA WOOD



COOKE
& LEWIS

Enjoy cabinetry with stunning exteriors and clever interiors. Cooke & Lewis Carisbrooke Framed kitchen features Taupe base units with Oak wall cupboards, £2,253 for eight units*, B&Q

Finding your PERFECT MIX

Discover B&Q's new kitchens – bringing together luxury, quality and affordability

From hand-selected timber materials on Cooke & Lewis doors to the highest-quality budget options, B&Q's new kitchen collections are opening up a new world of possibilities. And it's the attention to detail in design and functionality that's making all the difference. Undergoing rigorous testing, with cabinets made to the highest specification, the emphasis of the latest Cooke & Lewis collection is on

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A high-end kitchen that's made to be cooked in, lived in and loved.
Cooke & Lewis Carisbrooke ivory-framed kitchen, £2,253 for eight units*, B&Q



COME ON OVER TO OUR PLACE

Cooke & Lewis Carisbrooke Ivory Framed kitchen is made for entertaining – and cooking

As the nation's passion for cooking and entertaining grows, kitchen space that's both durable and sociable is becoming more of a necessity. We want stylish yet functional kitchens in which we can cook up a storm for parties and gatherings. The Carisbrooke Ivory Framed kitchen by Cooke & Lewis at B&Q is a robust, luxurious, top-of-the-range design that has been put through its paces with meticulous testing, and which hits the mark for today's home chefs.

B&Q's cabinets are built by top manufacturers here in the UK, and the Cooke & Lewis doors are made using the latest production technology, with hand-selected timber materials in Italy – the priorities being lasting quality, style and storage. Carisbrooke is full of dream kitchens that won't cost the earth.



Choose from impressive extras and appliances, including wine storage and double-oven range cookers. Clockwise from top left Built-in wine rack frames, W150mm, £35 each; curved wall door, £175; Setura 1.5-bowl ceramic

gloss white sink, £217; Spirex tap in chrome finish, £118; pewter-effect cup handles, £8 for a pair; latch handles, £8 for a pair; framed glazed door and drawer front, £120; Cookmaster dual-fuel range cooker, £950, all B&Q

STURDY AND STYLISH

New Cooke & Lewis Raffello High Gloss by B&Q creates the perfect stylish kitchen

A kitchen that's the heart of a household needs to be strong and tough as well as warm and welcoming – and the Cooke & Lewis Raffello High Gloss anthracite slab from B&Q ticks all of those boxes with ease. The cabinets are made in the heart of Devon and the doors are lacquered in Italy – they are built to last and boast contemporary simplicity.

Raffello High Gloss anthracite slab gives you a wealth of high-spec options to choose from, including bifold units, pull-out larders and magic corners. Team it all with a self-cleaning pyrolytic oven, an anywhere induction hob and a high-definition granite-finish worksurface, and you have a beautiful and affordable Cooke & Lewis kitchen.



Clever drawer interiors ensure everything is to hand yet kept neatly out of sight, while curved cupboard edges add a smooth, ergonomic finish. To make light work of washing and rinsing, hi-tech pull-out spray

taps are available, as well as wipe-clean gas-on-glass hobs. Premium Plus 3 drawer pan boxes, £224; Curved wall door, £175; Tronto spring-neck tap in black, £78; four-burner gas-on-glass hob, £272, all B&Q





Urban-style cabinetry and metallic accessories give this kitchen a dynamic edge. Cooke & Lewis Raffello High Gloss kitchen in anthracite slab, £1,763 for eight units*, B&Q





Adding glass cabinet doors to a run of wall units creates an extra flash of contemporary detail and makes a compact room appear far brighter.

Sandford Cherry Effect Modern kitchen, £658 for eight units*, B&Q

A FINE FIT

The Sandford Cherry Effect Modern kitchen by B&Q offers clever solutions for small spaces

Choosing a small kitchen that's high quality, great value and looks just right can be hard, but the B&Q Sandford kitchen is a revelation. Available in five colour options, including a textured-oak effect, this is an on-trend, sleek kitchen that frees up space, looks stunning and meets the highest standards. It also comes with a 10-year product guarantee that assures lasting quality.

Styled with subtle industrial references and coupled with the latest appliances, including a glass-angled extractor fan and ceramic hob, plus sleek taps and Wellington wall tiles, this is a warm, modern and wonderfully refreshing kitchen. Adding your choice of coloured accessories and herb pots will give it the final finishing flourish.



The latest energy efficient appliances, sleek sinks and taps sit perfectly with the warm cherry wood-effect cabinetry. Clockwise from top left Hotpoint SB5638CXS single oven in black/

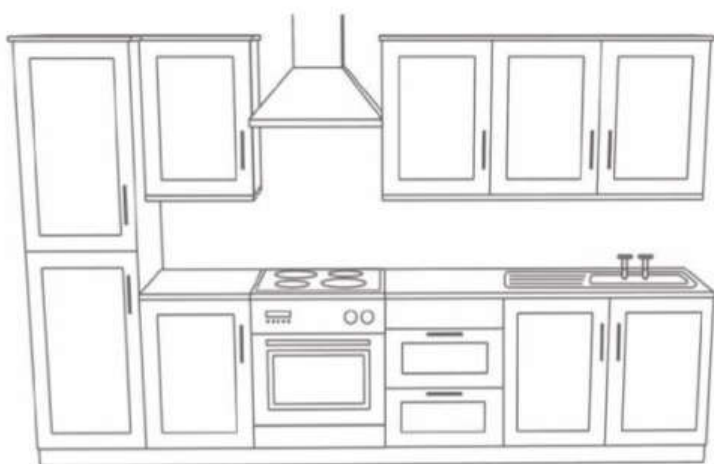
stainless steel, £328; Setura single-bowl ceramic gloss white sink, £187; Brita Kelda Chrome Finish water-filter tap, £204; Wellington wall tiles, £18.27sq m; Sandford Cherry Effect Modern glazed door, £40; bar handles, £8 each, all B&Q

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*EIGHT CABINET KITCHEN

Here's an example of what's included in a standard eight-cabinet Cooke & Lewis kitchen.

- 1000mm base unit • 500mm multi-drawer base unit • 600mm built-under oven housing unit • 500mm base unit • 600mm larder unit • 2 x 500mm wall unit • 1000mm wall unit. **Also included** Base, wall and larder decor end panels; 38mm thick 3m laminate worktop; cornice; light pelmet and continuous plinth; handles. **Not included** Oven, hob, sink and taps.

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B&Q Spaces is a new online interactive tool that allows you to see exactly how your new kitchen will look and what it will cost. At your free design consultant appointment, you'll be shown how to use B&Q Spaces, so that you can play around with your preferences at home at your leisure, adding units and moving them or taking them away until you find a design that's just right. You're never on your own – there's expert advice readily available to you at every stage, until your dream kitchen is complete.





A KIND OF MAGIC

Helen and John Charlton's cosy country hideaway is filled with enchanting creative touches at this time of year

FEATURE HAZEL DOLAN | PHOTOGRAPHY JEREMY PHILLIPS



KITCHEN
Helen's collection of china was the inspiration for the colour scheme in here. Bespoke cabinets, Howdens. Walls painted in Green Blue estate emulsion, £38 for 2.5 litres, Farrow & Ball. China, from £13, Emma Bridgewater



SITTING ROOM
The fireplace was made with local sandstone. 'The oak beam took a day and a half to fit but it looks beautiful,' says Helen. Oak beam, G O'Brien & Sons – Salvo is a good source of reclaimed oak. Cambridge armchair, from £850, Laura Ashley. Chimney breast painted in Pigeon estate emulsion, £38 for 2.5 litres, Farrow & Ball



HOME TRUTHS

THE PROPERTY

19th-century terraced cottage

LOCATION Yorkshire

ROOMS Sitting room, kitchen, one bedroom, bathroom

PURCHASED 2007

PREVIOUS PROPERTY

'This is our holiday cottage. We live in an 18th-century farmhouse in Durham,' says Helen.



LESSONS LEARNT *'I used the same colours throughout to give the compact area a kind of flow. Also, it's vital to know when to stop adding things to avoid clutter'*

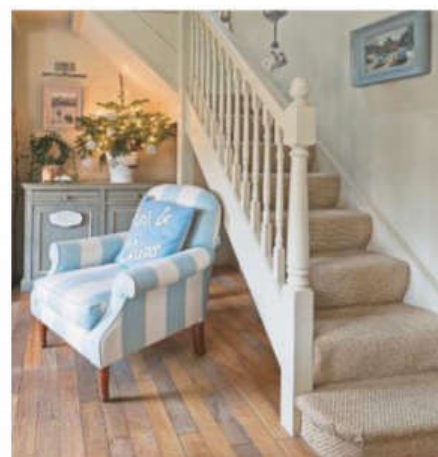
December is always hectic for artist and designer Helen Charlton. First of all, there's a packed schedule of festive craft workshops, such as garland and wreath making, at her farmhouse home; and this is followed by lots of entertaining. 'We have a houseful at Christmas, and it's lovely. Then we pack up, get in the car and head here to our cottage on the North York Moors. It's just the two of us, we walk on the beach and that's when the wind-down from the festive season really happens – it's the best part.'

Helen grew up in a cliff-top house 20 miles north of the cottage, and her favourite

childhood memories were all of day trips to Whitby, the coast and the moors, so with a legacy from her parents, the couple decided to buy a cottage in the place she had loved best. It proved harder than they had thought.

'There were lots of beautiful properties, but nothing was quite right,' she says. 'Then the details for Lavender Cottage came in the post, and I knew this was the one.' Huddled at the bottom of a valley on the moors' edge and half hidden behind its garden, the little stone house was exactly what Helen wanted: a romantic, just-for-two retreat.

There was no urgent need to redecorate, so they held off making any changes for the



FAVOURITE ROOM *'The bedroom in the eaves is really lovely. When the sun shines in, it lights up the crystals on the chandelier beautifully'*

BEDROOM

Garlands from Helen's Busy Bee Studio craft workshops adorn the bedstead.

French Chateau bed, from £1,416, Bonsoni, is a good match. Duvet cover, from £40, The White Company. Abbeville wallpaper, £34 per roll, Laura Ashley, is a good alternative



first eight months. During that time, Helen kept a design notebook, filling it with ideas and inspiration, until the builder – who had worked on their farmhouse – was ready to begin. 'He moved in for five weeks,' she says. 'I made sure that everything he needed would arrive on time, which I'd found out was vital when we were renovating our farmhouse.' The main aim was to add character, while at the same time making the most of the space. Finding room for a dining area was tricky, but they managed to squeeze a breakfast bar into the kitchen. Another clever move was to fit a skylight in the bathroom to add natural light to the space.

On her weekly visits to the house, Helen could see it all taking shape: the dark beams were stripped ready for painting, a sandstone fireplace was installed, the floors were laid, rooms were re-plastered and a new kitchen and bathroom were fitted. When it came to decorating, she chose cool coastal colours as her base. Seaside blue-greens, sand-toned creams and pebble greys, all bring a fresh, yet relaxed style to the cottage, while dashes of red and pink here and there add a cosy touch. The furniture is a mix of classic pieces – such as the linen sofa and French-style bed – combined with vintage finds.

Against this backdrop, Helen likes to keep seasonal decorations natural and understated. Greenery gathered from the hedgerows, candlelight and hand-crafted accessories all suit the property best.

For Helen and John, no Christmas is complete without a visit to the cottage, with walks along the shore and cosy evenings by the log fire. 'I feel that my parents would approve, as they loved the area so much,' says Helen. 'And I enjoy being here just as much in winter as I do in summer.'

BATHROOM
A lightwell or tube skylight is a smart solution for bringing daylight into an internal room.

Sun tunnel skylight, from £200, Velux. Travertine tiles, £19.99sq m, Topps Tiles. Walls painted in Green Blue estate emulsion, £38 for 2.5 litres, Farrow & Ball



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STUDIES

BEDROOMS

LOUNGES

LIBRARIES

HOME CINEMA

HALL
Flowers and fairy lights welcome guests. White wood star with LEDs, £60, Mac Creative. Try Ikea for a kilim rug, £150, like this one

TWINKLE, TWINKLE

Mia and David Walker's home is dressed to impress for the seasonal celebrations

FEATURE MAGGIE COLVIN | PHOTOGRAPHY TONY TIMMINGTON

SITTING ROOM

This space is all set for the big day.

The Snowdrop sofa, from £1,249, Sofa.com, is comparable. Shudder gold stripe silk cushions, £25 each, India Jane. Concrete candlesticks, from £32, One World Trading Company



DINING ROOM

'This area forms the perfect backdrop for the oak furniture David inherited,' says Mia.

Early Oak Reproductions' Berwick oak pedestal table and six chairs, £3,650, would suit this setting; it also sells pewter plates, from £113. Emily quilted placemats, £48 for six, Neptune



KITCHEN

A row of candles creates a soft red glow in this classic neutral scheme.

Shaker-style cabinetry, price on request, Optiplan Kitchens. Reclaimed flagstone flooring, £120sq m, Lassco





MASTER BEDROOM
Vibrant colour updates this space.
Grenadine turquoise/gold cushion cover, £55; faux-mohair throw, £44, both Oka. Wreath, £60, Going to Pot



'My husband David and I have always wanted to live in a period cottage surrounded by woods and meadows,' says Mia Walker, who fell in love with this Surrey home, complete with cobblestone façade, lattice windows and oak beams. 'We both love inglenooks, too, so we knew this would be the ideal home, especially at Christmas.'

However, the existing floral wallpaper, coupled with the beams and patterned carpets made the rooms feel a little dark and dated. On top of that, the property needed completely rewiring and refreshing to bring it up to date. Mia and David embraced the challenges of modernisation with enthusiasm and were richly rewarded when they uncovered a vaulted ceiling in the kitchen. 'The extra height made the room seem so much larger and lighter, and was a refreshing contrast to the cosiness of the other rooms with their lower ceilings,' says Mia.

As well as painting the walls white and laying plain, pale carpet throughout, Mia decided the

cottage needed to be brought alive with splashes of bright colour, too. 'The oak beams looked dull on their own,' she says, 'but a pop of intense colour adds that necessary lift.'

The couple's Christmas decorations have elevated the interior even further, and Mia admits to having to hold herself back. 'I always buy some new pieces and given a bigger budget I could easily go over the top,' she smiles. Instead, she has used fake foliage mixed with natural greenery from the garden for added depth, and combined candles with twinkling fairy lights. Having gnarled old beams has come in handy, too. 'A few nail marks hardly show, so we can hammer in a tack or two to hang garlands across the horizontal beams over the inglenook fireplaces,' explains Mia.

The result is warm, cosy and idyllic, and on Christmas Day, a steady stream of friends and family sit around the fire enjoying mince pies washed down with celebratory drinks. 'The house looks so pretty,' says Mia. 'Living in an old cottage in the country is a dream come true.' 25

DISTINCTIVE



HOME TRUTHS

THE PROPERTY

A 16th-century farm cottage

LOCATION Surrey

ROOMS Hall, sitting room, dining room, kitchen, snug, utility room, cloakroom, conservatory, six bedrooms, three bathrooms

PURCHASED 2008

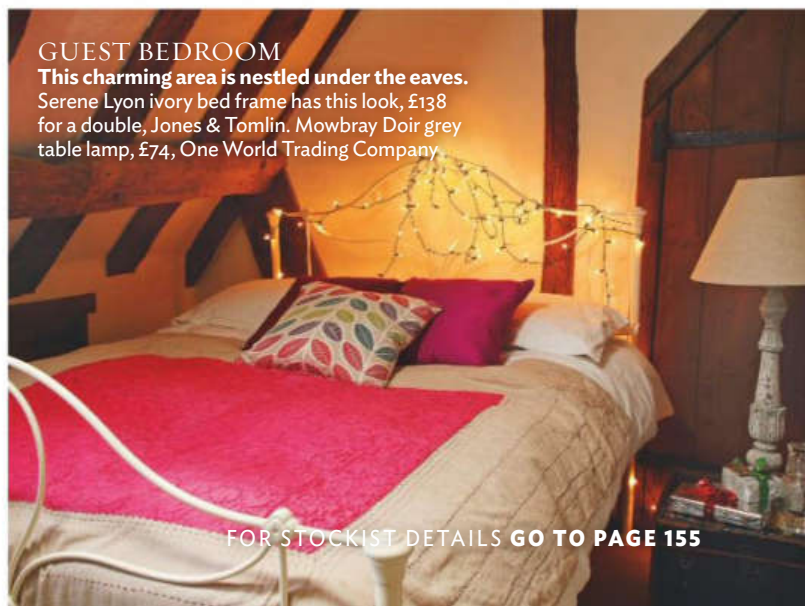
PREVIOUS PROPERTY

'Before buying this place, we lived in a 1930s house, which was also in Surrey,' says Mia.

DECORATING TIP 'Bright accessories can be used to uplift overbearing beams – I find turquoise, burnt orange and fuchsia pink all work really well'



BATHROOM
Reclaimed wooden flooring was laid to match the beams. Reclaimed antique oak floorboards, £140sq m, Lassco. Stamford roll-top bath, £1,394, Sanitan



GUEST BEDROOM

This charming area is nestled under the eaves.

Serene Lyon ivory bed frame has this look, £138 for a double, Jones & Tomlin. Mowbray Doir grey table lamp, £74, One World Trading Company

FOR STOCKIST DETAILS GO TO PAGE 155

INSPIRING



HOME TRUTHS

THE PROPERTY

Victorian maisonette

LOCATION East London

ROOMS Sitting/dining room, kitchen, two bedrooms (one en suite), bathroom, roof terrace

PURCHASED 2013

PREVIOUS PROPERTY

'We were renting a ground-floor garden flat in south London before we moved here,' says Lisa.

CHRISTMAS SEWN UP

Lisa Comfort's creative skills come to the fore as she prepares her home for the festive season

FEATURE RACHEL LEEDHAM | PHOTOGRAPHY RACHAEL SMITH







DINING AREA

Handpainted paper from India decorates the tree container. Dorset soft truffle dining table, £1,000, Laura Ashley, is a good match. Norden benches, £50 each, Ikea, are comparable

For Lisa Comfort, the festive season really begins when she and her fiancé Matt Blake invite friends over for mulled wine and mince pies the last Sunday before Christmas. 'The decorations are up by then,' she says, 'so the flat looks really cosy and inviting.'

In keeping with the vibrant furnishings and accessories that define the couple's maisonette apartment in east London, many of the decorations are brightly coloured, from a cheery string of fairy lights in the kitchen to turquoise baubles on the tree. 'I add something every year,' says Lisa. 'One of my most recent buys was a set of 1950s glass baubles.'

Lisa also enjoys crafting table mats and votive candleholders. 'I've been designing things since I got my first sewing machine when I was 11,' she recalls. 'By learning to sew I could indulge my passion for both fashion and interiors.' Years later, Lisa has turned her hobby into a business, running two sewing cafés and an online shop. So unsurprisingly, the couple's home is filled with her projects. 'This is the first property we've bought, so it was a chance to put my stamp on it,' she says.

The Victorian building had been converted into flats by a joiner a few years ago. 'He added some great details, such as faux panelling and a double doorway



KITCHEN

Colourful accessories and textiles lend a sense of fun to what was formerly a bland area.

Habitat's Macey baskets are a match, from £35 each. Anthropologie has a good ceramics range, from £12



DECORATING TIP

'Think about how you want to feel in each room. I chose bright, uplifting colours for busy spaces such as the kitchen and calm, restful shades for the bedroom'

to the sitting room, which helps the light travel through,' explains Lisa. 'We didn't need to do much else in the way of work, other than incorporate a shower in the en suite. It was just the decor that was dated. I repainted the rooms in neutral shades to provide a subtle backdrop so I could fill the house with colourful textiles.'

The turquoise mirror above the fireplace in the sitting room inspired the bright blue scheme. 'I love the mirror, but it looked out of place, so I added pieces to complement it,' says Lisa. She made cushions and a pouffe in toning shades, and had a wing chair re-upholstered in a striking fabric. A patchwork kilim ties the hues together. 'It reminded me of the rugs I'd seen in Istanbul.'

In the kitchen, Lisa has given the plain white cabinetry a lift with bright crockery displayed on open shelves and she used a bold ikat fabric from India to make a Roman blind and a lampshade. From India she also picked up the patterned woven baskets that hang from the wall to provide extra storage.

Evidence of Lisa's creative streak is everywhere, from the stair risers and bath panel enlivened with wallpaper to high-street benches with a decoupage finish. 'I love being hands-on with a project,' she says. And this Christmas, she will be undertaking an extra-special project, as the couple are getting married. 'I'm so excited about a festive wedding,' smiles Lisa. 25



STAIRCASE

Lisa added an eye-catching wallpaper to the stair risers, varnishing it to protect it from scuffs. Garden City wallpaper, £59.95 per roll, Miss Print



BATHROOM

A bold print adds colour. Dewdrops wallpaper in Sea, £59.95 per roll, Miss Print. Pure semi pedestal, £70, Bathstore, is near-identical



MASTER BEDROOM

Two wooden chests of drawers have been repainted in a pale eau de nil shade that tones with the room's restful colour scheme. Thea tripod table lamp, £45; Thea tripod floor lamp, £63, both Very. H&M has similar cushion covers, £4 each. For a white star decoration like these ones try Hicks & Hicks, from £3 each

SNUG

This is a relaxing spot for coffee and mince pies.

Bowmore sofa, £1,300; Braemar armchair, £850; Bowmore ottoman, £450; all Tetrad. For a similar chandelier, see the selection at Cotterell & Co, from £85

INSPIRING



HOME TRUTHS

THE PROPERTY

Detached farmhouse

LOCATION East Lothian

ROOMS Sitting room, drawing room, kitchen-diner, study, snug, utility room, cloakroom, five bedrooms (two en suite), two bathrooms

PURCHASED 2004
PREVIOUS PROPERTY

'We lived in a smaller house in a nearby hamlet before moving here,' says Louise.

WINTER'S TALE

Louise Fraser and her family enjoy country life to the full in their splendid Georgian home, decorated abundantly for the festive season

FEATURE ALISON GIBB | PHOTOGRAPHY DOUGLAS GIBB



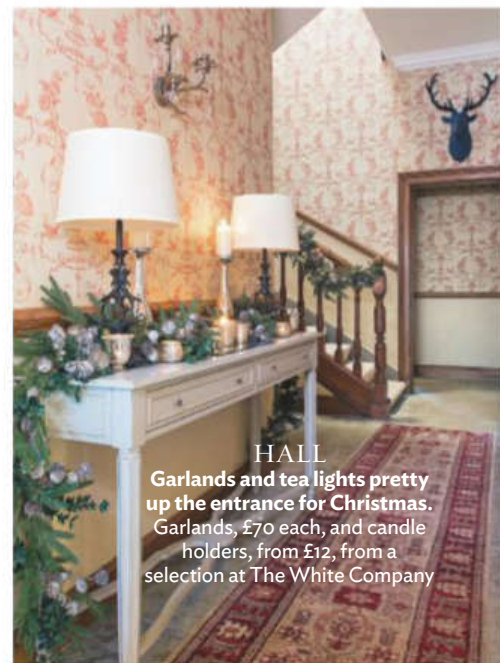
DRAWING ROOM
Splashes of gold and a twinkling tree add shimmer to this elegant scheme.
 Duresta Hornblower sofa, from £4,299 each, House of Fraser.
 Overmantel mirror, £60, Martin & Frost. Silk curtains, made to order from £4,000, Castle Cottage Interiors





KITCHEN-DINER

A chunky table and upholstered chairs make the space informal and welcoming. Similar cabinetry would cost around £25,000 at Neptune. Walls painted in Ball Green estate emulsion, £38 for 2.5 litres, Farrow & Ball. The Gamekeeper's oak table, £999; Highland Wool chairs, £349 each, Indigo



HALL

Garlands and tea lights pretty up the entrance for Christmas. Garlands, £70 each, and candle holders, from £12, from a selection at The White Company



SCARLETT'S BEDROOM
The coloured floral bedding is perfect for this feminine room. PiP Birds In Paradise quilt, from around £66, PiP Studio



BATHROOM
A painted roll-top bath coordinates with the colourful wallpaper. Salcombe bath, £995, Cast Iron Bath Company, is similar



MASTER BEDROOM
The taupe wallpaper gives the room a soothing feel. Grand Tour wallpaper, £78 per roll, Zoffany. Overmantle mirror, £350, Achica

Louise Fraser and her husband Scott moved to the East Lothian countryside before their daughter, Scarlett, now 15, was born. Louise has always enjoyed horse riding and wanted her daughter to experience a rural lifestyle, too. And at this time of year, the space and location become even more important.

'At Christmas, this is a home that comes into its own,' says Louise of her Georgian farmhouse. 'We have family nearby so we share the entertaining. This year, we'll be at my brother's on Christmas Day then everyone will be here on New Year's Day.'

When Louise and Scott moved in to the house, there was nothing major to be done. Initially they redecorated with a neutral

palette, giving Louise time to slowly seek inspiration to make bolder choices with paint colour and wallpapers. 'Adding garlands and candles at Christmas makes the house even prettier,' she says. 'Winter in the Scottish countryside can be harsh, so festive decorations are always very welcome.'

The pair updated the drawing room fireplace and laid a stone floor in the kitchen. 'I've been inspired by the rustic decor at a local spa on a country estate,' explains Louise, 'so although I've gone for a traditional look I haven't shied away from design-led wallpapers and furniture.'

They went on to replace the bathrooms and slowly redecorate throughout. 'Being able to take my time was really beneficial,' says

Louise. 'If you're in a hurry, you either make mistakes or play it safe, but a dramatic period property like this merits experimentation.'

Her look mixes designer pieces with bargain finds. 'I have favourite shops, such as The White Company and Oka, but I also love finding hidden treasures in TK Maxx,' says Louise. The result is an original, unpredictable scheme. 'But this time of year is when I can have fun,' she says.

The entrance hall has a warm welcome with a console table packed with elegant tea lights; a berried garland winds up the banister, and in the drawing room, a Christmas tree takes pride of place. 'The house is a festive place,' reflects Louise, 'and there's nothing we like better than gathering here to celebrate.' 25

What you
smell.

What your
guests smell.



Have you gone noseblind?

Febreze truly eliminates odours and leaves a light Christmas scent.



Breathe Happy

THE SOURCE

Erica Miller shows how you can achieve the style secrets in this issue's homes

Design ideas



WALL-HUNG BASKETS



Pages
102–105

In Lisa Comfort's kitchen, vibrant baskets have been hung on the wall for storage. A great way of keeping household essentials close at hand, the baskets provide handy cubby holes for items such

as tea cosies and linens. Imaginative and well thought out, this vertical storage solution is both stylish and functional. The colours of the baskets chime perfectly with the hand-painted china, canisters and lampshade. This inexpensive idea would work equally well for storing toys in a child's bedroom. In this case the baskets have been attached to the wall with metal hooks. Another idea would be to attach them to a rail with zip-ties. Cube-shaped rattan or wire baskets can also look good when hung in a kitchen or bathroom.

QUIRKY CHAIR BACKS



Pages
34–38

When it comes to interior design, it is the finishing touches that make all the difference. In the Portens' dining area, the chairs have been dressed with covers that lace up at the back, similar to a corset. This

attention to detail elevates the room out of the ordinary. Removable slip covers like these are practical as they can be removed for cleaning or changed with the seasons. Other ways of dressing up chairs include attaching bows, adding a ruffle at the bottom for a shabby chic look, or sewing a line of buttons down the back. Temporary designs for special occasions include attaching corsages, handpainted signs or a string of beads. For Christmas, suspend baubles, pine cones on ribbon or tiny wreaths of foliage from the chair back.

DRESS STAIR RISERS



Pages
127–129

Stairs are one of the first things people see when they walk through your front door. They offer an opportunity to create a visual impact. The Fieldings have come up with a quirky and attractive

way of decorating their stair risers. Each riser has been covered with an off-cut of wallpaper. A mixture of floral prints, butterflies and vintage-inspired patterns have been used. For a cohesive look, choose designs that are linked by colour or mood. To ensure the stairs take centre stage, the walls have been painted a neutral colour and the treads are a crisp white. To protect their handiwork the Fieldings have painted the paper with two coats of clear varnish. This ensures they are durable enough to withstand kicks and scuffs of constant feet.

Inspired shopping



Christmas garland

Take your cue from the Figg family and make a statement with your Christmas decorations. For a chic garland that you can display on a console table or mantel, try this fabulous faux one with cones and berries, L180cm, £19, Very.



Pages
131–134



Pages
137–139

House lanterns

If you covet the house-shaped lanterns on the Hodnetts' windowsill, the Dutch Canal house candleholders in pierced tin, £59 for three, Plümo, have the same look.



Pages
18–23

Red glasses

Ruby red stemware adorns the Ahearnes' festive dining table. If you aspire to this look you'll like the Boston goblet, £20.50, Villeroy & Boch.



Patchwork rug

A bright blue decorative patchwork rug helps soften the floorboards in Lisa and Matt's relaxing sitting room. Take a look at the similar Vintage Multi Turquoise design



Pages
102–105

from Louis de Poortere, from £145 for a rug measuring 80 x 150cm.



Traditional armchair

An elegant armchair strikes just the right note in the Fieldings' stylish sitting room. For something akin to this try the Petersham armchair, £1,300, The White Company.



Pages
127–129



Pages
72–74

Twig tree

If you admire the tall twig tree in Hannah and Richard's sitting room, then try this Tree with Snow, a modern LED tree that is 200cm high, £78, icicles not included, Potter & Rest.

Design solutions

ADD INTEREST TO INTERIORS WITH PANELLING

Wall panelling can add architectural interest – the trick is to make it look as though it's always been there



DECORATIVE DESIGN



The Camerons are fortunate to have retained many of the original features in their period home, including the wall panelling in their dining room. Striking and effective, the panels above

have been given a unique twist. Simple panels have been fixed to the walls and painted black, within each one an abstract wallpaper has been pasted. Avalon sofa in Electric Ikat Cobalt by Mariska Meijers, £1,090, Design Lab at Sofa.com. Painted Ikat Black wallpaper, £60 per 10m roll, Mariska Meijers. Black Blue modern emulsion, £42 for 2.5 litres, Farrow & Ball.

BESPOKE BATH



Custom made to fit perfectly, the Ahearnes' country-style bathroom features a very unusual gothic-inspired bath panel. Tailor-made touches like this are ideal for giving your bathroom a distinct

identity and a well-appointed look. Seen here is the Bowood bathroom, which features a corner bath encased in fine inlaid wood panelling. The ultimate in bespoke bathroom design, the chessboard pattern of the maple and walnut marquetry gives a striking look. Even the latch handles and hinges have been fashioned by hand. Prices from £25,000, Mark Wilkinson.

PAPER PANELS



In the Moores' stylish home, wallpaper has been used to simulate the look of real panelling in their master bedroom. This clever trick of the eye is highly effective and more

affordable than installing real wood panelling. Imitation wallpaper like this works beautifully in a hall or dining room. Alternatively, to create a design feature, limit the pattern to a cosy nook or alcove. It could also be used to create an eye-catching focal point wall, or as a clever way of creating a zone within an open-plan space. Shown here is the Library Panel wallpaper, £85 per 10m roll, Cole & Son.

5 OF THE BEST *Seasonal candles and diffusers*

Scent your home with some of our favourite luxurious fragrances this Christmas



Noel home fragrance porcelain diffuser, £38, Crabtree & Evelyn



Dark Amber candle, £29, Osprey London



Christmas Wish limited-edition three-wick candle with 18 carat gold, £49.95, Neom Organics



Pine and eucalyptus home candle, £42, Jo Malone



Tom Dixon scent orientalist diffuser, £65, Houseology

Inspired shopping



Pages
77-79

Windsor chair

Andrew Halsey has opted for timeless, classic Windsor chairs in his country-style kitchen. Follow his example with the similar Woodcroft Windsor armchair, £488, One World Trading Company.



Pages
106-109

Tree decorations

An array of tasteful baubles add the final touch to the Frasers' tree. Emulate this look with the floral bauble in hand-blown painted glass, £12, Pia Jewellery.



Pages
56-59

Green paint

For a look of distinction, the Camerons' have painted their kitchen units and dining table in a striking shade of green. Florence chalk paint, £18.95 per 1 litre, Annie Sloan, creates a similar effect.



Pages
46-49

Ornate metal bed

The bedroom is a place to indulge the senses. If you've fallen for Gina Fresle's silver bed, you'll love the Tree of Life Bed, £1,625, And So To Bed.



Pages
34-38

Swedish clock

A beautiful Grandfather clock makes a statement in the Portens' dining room. This Antique Swedish Mora clock with handpainted details, £3,000, Gustavian, is along the same lines.



Pages
106-109

Tartan fabric

To create the right mood in their spacious kitchen-diner, the Frasers' have upholstered their dining chairs in a tartan fabric, similar to the Arrochar Russet wool fabric, £49.50m, Voyage Decoration.



Single Cord 200 thread count Egyptian cotton bedlinen, from £18

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SURFACE MATTERS

This festive season, treat your home – and your guests – to elegant new kitchen and bathroom tiles from Topps Tiles

As Christmas approaches, you don't want your kitchen or bathroom letting the side down when family and friends come to visit. Beautiful floor and wall tiles have an amazing ability to elevate a room in an instant, while also offering a practical surface for your home. And at Topps Tiles you'll find an impressive selection of great-quality tiles and all the design inspiration you'll need to transform your space.

The kitchen is the busiest area in the house, which along with the bathroom gets even busier during the

festive celebrations. So investing in good-quality, durable tiles is essential for long-lasting appeal. But choosing them is a big decision that can often be daunting as there are so many things to consider – from material, colour and pattern to size, shape and price. Luckily Topps Tiles, the UK's leading tile specialist, is here to guide you through the process, offering friendly advice on timeless trends to create a look you'll love for years to come. So for outstanding choice, quality and service, make sure Topps Tiles is on your Christmas shopping list.

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Zelve slate-effect porcelain tile, was £9.71; now £6.47



Parthian floor tile, was £2.73; now £2.18



Silvabirch Alpine Shimmer tile, was £12.85; now £10.28



Kapok Wood Cement Beige tile, was £5.45; now £4.35



FS Salisbury, tile, was £13.74; now £9.16



Callan Brick porcelain tile, was £3.22; now £2.57

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WARM WELCOME

Kerry and James Cowan make the most of their calm and cosy home over the festive period by inviting all the family round

FEATURE FIONA REID | PHOTOGRAPHY DOUGLAS GIBB

SITTING ROOM

'The house was very dark, so lightening the spaces was one of our priorities,' says Kerry, who chose a palette of soft grey hues. Branagh Chesterfield sofa, £999, Made. Vince coffee table is a good match, £350, Habitat. Walls painted in Skimming Stone modern emulsion, £42 for 2.5 litres, Farrow & Ball



INSPIRING



HOME TRUTHS

THE PROPERTY

Victorian cottage

LOCATION

Peeblesshire, Scotland

ROOMS

Sitting room, kitchen-diner, snug, study, utility room, three bedrooms (one en suite), bathroom

PURCHASED

2013

PREVIOUS PROPERTY

'Before moving here, we lived in a Victorian flat in Edinburgh, which we also refurbished,' says Kerry.

SNUG

Textural soft furnishings and a roaring fire create a cosy feel in this quiet seating area.

Knitted grey pouffe, £125, Abode, has this look. Camford brown leather armchair, £999, John Lewis, is comparable. Wooden stag head kit, £15, Notonthehighstreet.com. Walls painted in Wimborne White modern emulsion, £42 for 2.5 litres, Farrow & Ball



KITCHEN

This large open-plan space is great for entertaining at Christmas time.

Tewkesbury kitchen with oak worktops, price on application, Howdens. Bramley dresser is similar, £1,600, Laura Ashley. Samara bench, £299; and Samara dining table, from £499, both John Lewis



Having completely renovated their previous property in Edinburgh, Kerry and James Cowan were no strangers to the demands of a project when they viewed their current

house in Peeblesshire three years ago. But this place presented them with a much bigger challenge. 'It needed a lot of work as there was no central heating and very basic wiring from the 1960s, and it had woodworm, plus dry and wet rot,' says Kerry. 'The roof needed work and the windows all had to be replaced, but for some reason we still felt this was the right one for us.'

The couple, who have two children, Charlotte, 4, and Florence, 2, were able to continue living in their Edinburgh flat while the major work was carried out. And as Kerry was pregnant with Florence at the time, they wanted to have the house completed before she was born. Kerry took on the day-to-day project management, which involved driving 23 miles each day

to visit the site. 'There was a lot of juggling and travelling,' she recalls. 'But we used some of the tradesmen we'd worked with before, and also recommendations, so we had a really good, trustworthy team.'


Lots of original features, including floorboards and fireplaces, remained intact. However, as with any old building, unforeseen problems arose along the way. 'These were things that we hadn't factored into our budget, which set the project back and put everyone under pressure,' says Kerry. 'By the time we eventually moved in, there was electricity, central heating and a plumbed bathroom, but it was still a building site – literally!'

The original owner, a tailor, had built an extension to use as his workshop, and the couple realised that it would be the perfect spot for an open-plan kitchen, dining and seating area. 'We wanted a space that was functional and comfortable for family living and entertaining,' explains Kerry.

A false wall was built to create a chimney breast for the range cooker and bring some

balance to the room; traditional Shaker-style cabinetry was fitted, with a Victorian dresser found on eBay painted to match. 'Originally I was considering a more modern look,' says Kerry, 'but we felt this pull to do what was right for the style of the house.' This mix of old and new appears throughout, with contemporary furniture and antique finds giving the Cowans' house a lived-in feel.

As for the decor, all the woodwork was unpainted, but while it was beautiful, the couple thought it made the rooms too dark and dated. Now a palette of chalky greys and neutral tones keeps things fresh and bright.

'At Christmas, we style the house to make it feel warm and homely,' says Kerry. 'We invite family round and everyone has plenty of space to relax, whether it's in the formal sitting room or casual kitchen-diner. And because we live in a rural area, we'll go for walks and enjoy the outdoors. On a cold December day, there's nothing better than returning home and getting an open fire crackling in the beautiful old fireplaces.' 



MASTER BEDROOM

Soft stone-hued walls and pale bedlinens are contrasted with the wooden sleigh bed. And So To Bed's Chateau bed, £4,775 for a double, has this look. Rectangular sheepskin rug would work well here, from £125, Lambland



BATHROOM

The couple wanted to give this space a modern style that would not date.

Metro White wall tiles, £19.50sq m; Rectified White Matt floor tiles, £29.94sq m, both Topps Tiles

DESIGN TIP *'Be sympathetic to the era of the property. Treasure original features and choose furniture that complements its age and room proportions'*



CHARLOTTE'S ROOM

Kerry designed her daughter's room to be fun and stylish, with plenty of floor space to play.

Walls painted in Calluna modern emulsion, £42 for 2.5 litres, Farrow & Ball. Oliver bed, £325, Feather & Black. Teepee, £99; Harrow & Green Christmas sack, £22, both Notonthehighstreet.com

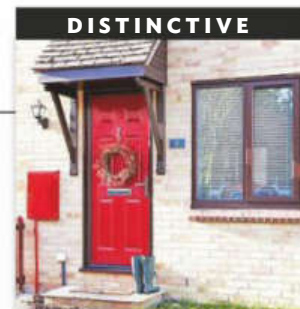


I

FEELING FESTIVE



2



DISTINCTIVE

HOME TRUTHS

THE PROPERTY

Semi-detached house, built around 1976

LOCATION Berkshire

ROOMS Sitting room/kitchen-diner, two bedrooms, bathroom

PURCHASED 2013

PREVIOUS PROPERTY

'This is the very first home we've owned together as a couple,' explains Georgina.

With their house now just as they want it, Georgina and William Monelle are looking forward to the holiday season

FEATURE JESS CONTOMICHALOS
PHOTOGRAPHY ISABELLA HAIGH

I BREAKFAST BAR

'Our worktop was a luxurious choice, but worth it,' says Georgina. Quartz worktop, from £250/sq m, Bushboard. Pendant lights, from £339 each, Bestlite

2 SITTING ROOM/ KITCHEN

A simple colour scheme perfectly suits the newly opened-up space. Sonoma II sofa and footstool, from £699 for a two-seat sofa; rug, from £30, all Next. Cabinet, £1,400 (made to measure), MijMoj. Sensation Twist Crystal Grey carpet, from £16.99/m sq, Cormar Carpets



With their wedding plans underway, Georgina and William Monelle were keen to find their first home to share as newlyweds. As their family and friends

live in Berkshire, a two bedroom semi on the county's outskirts proved to be in the ideal location for the couple.

When Georgina and William bought the house, it wasn't quite right, but they could see it had potential. 'It had two small downstairs rooms, but we wanted an open-plan living space,' says Georgina. So, they knocked a wall down to create one large area. 'It wasn't easy, and the dust was never-ending,' she adds. To create a unified feeling, they laid carpet throughout – with the exception of the kitchen and bathroom – to harmonize the flow of the interior.

STARTING FROM SCRATCH

The whole place needed redecorating, so Georgina scoured Pinterest. 'I researched and researched,' she says. 'I think it's really important to stick to the style of the house and use it to your advantage, so we decided to go retro-contemporary. Had we lived in an old cottage, we'd have gone for a country-style kitchen, and so on.' For their first Christmas together, the pair have chosen a Scandi-style tree hung with one-off decorations, and added touches of red to their existing scheme.

Upstairs, their wardrobe is almost walk-in – unusual for a small room. It's a clever idea as it makes the room appear bigger because all the clutter is hidden. 'We wanted to create as much space as possible so we concealed lots in the wardrobe, and the focus is now on our bed,' says Georgina. Fairy lights around the headboard and paper fan decorations at the window add a seasonal feel. 'The fairy lights are great all year round as they soften the scheme, but at Christmas they make it feel extra festive.'

One of the rooms they are most proud of is the bathroom. Although it is small, it has been designed beautifully. 'We wanted everything wall hung to free up the floor space,' explains Georgina. The white metro tiles help to open up the room, providing a contrast with the dark-painted walls.

'We're quite creative and, while our house is fairly compact, I think we've made the best of the space,' says Georgina. 'We're now looking forward to spending our first Christmas together in our new home.'



MASTER BEDROOM

Chic grey and yellow cushions teamed with white linen complement the statement bed.

Cannes bed, £910, Warren Evans. Cushions, from a selection, Dunelm. Forså lamp, £15, Ikea



BATHROOM

Built-in ledges and niches provide useful storage. Vitra and Gerberit suites at Bathstore are similar to this. Walls painted in Night Jewels 3 emulsion, £24.99 for 2.5 litres, Dulux



BEDROOM

The spacious wardrobe hides away any clutter.

Algot wall shelves, from £42; Nordli modular chest of two drawers, £75, all Ikea



GUEST BEDROOM

This area doubles up as a study, and the daybed is ideal when friends or family come to stay.

Sonoma sofa bed, £599, John Lewis. Eames-style chair, £49, Danetti. Oddvald trestles, £10 each, Ikea



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UNIQUE



HOME TRUTHS

THE PROPERTY Detached house built in the 1970s

LOCATION Sheffield

ROOMS Sitting/dining room, kitchen/breakfast/utility room, cloakroom, four bedrooms (one en suite), bathroom

PURCHASED 2010

PREVIOUS PROPERTY

'The last home we owned was a four-bedroom house, built in the 1980s,' says Deborah.

SITTING ROOM

A predominantly white scheme comes into its own at Christmas, creating a snowy, wintry feel.

Three-seater Ektorp sofas in Blekinge white, from £230 each, Ikea. Emsworth utility crates are similar, £58 for two, Garden Trading. Flowery cushion, £8, H&M. Heart of House Briar chandelier, £50, Argos

RING THE CHANGES

Deborah and Roger Fielding turned a 1970s house into a timeless home that's easy to adapt, whatever the season

FEATURE NAOMI JONES | PHOTOGRAPHY ROBERT SANDERSON

DESIGN TIP *'Always shop the sales for large pieces of furniture or light fittings, that way you'll get better-quality pieces within your budget'*



KITCHEN

Now open plan, this space has a real country feel.
Heritage Grey and Heritage Bone kitchen, from £7,000, Wickes.
Black and chrome stools, £40 for a pair, Homebase



KITCHEN

Floral wallpaper makes a gorgeous feature, while mismatched cushions and a patchwork sofa add to the thrifty-chic feel.
Antique Rose Bouquet wallpaper, £25 a roll, Cath Kidston. Similar patchwork sofa, around £2,600, Kelly Swallow



DINING AREA

The four-seater table and chairs look out onto the garden.

Table, £80, Bronte; painted in Old White chalk paint, £18.95 for 1 litre, Annie Sloan. For chairs like these, try the Carlo oak chair in beige, £59 each, Atlantic Shopping

MASTER BEDROOM

Layers of off-white, cream and dusky pink lend a vintage feel. Albertine bedspread is similar, £129, Maisons Du Monde. Robin cushion, £20, John Lewis. Try the Claudette easy-fit pendant, £80, Bhs

**EN SUITE**

Freestanding furniture in this spacious bathroom offers a flexible solution. Cupboard painted in Florence chalk paint, £18.95 for 1 litre, Annie Sloan. Glass storage jars, from £20, The White Company

**STAIRS**

The stair risers have been given an individual look with sheets of wrapping paper. Wrapping paper, from £1.50 a sheet, Paperchase



Like a present wrapped in brown paper ready for the perfect ribbon, a card open for just the right words, or a bare Christmas tree anticipating the pretty decorations, a simply decorated house is just a blank canvas waiting for someone with a little imagination and creativity to turn it into something special, thinks author and interior designer Deborah Fielding. 'Having all white walls allows you to play around with your style,' she says. 'It's very easy to alter the look with the seasons, or as your taste changes.'

Deborah speaks from personal experience – she and her husband Roger are self-confessed serial movers. 'We've renovated five properties in the last 20 years, but we couldn't resist this place when we saw it for sale five years ago,' she says. 'It wasn't the most beautiful house we've seen, inside or out,' admits Roger, 'but we loved its rural location and the space it offered inside. It has high ceilings, large rooms and picture windows – when we're indoors, we have the best of both worlds, which is doubly important to us, as we both work from home.'

With a shared passion for all things French, vintage and pretty, the couple invigorated the house to transform it from the ugly duckling it once was. 'I don't think the house had changed much since it was built,' says Deborah, 'the decoration certainly hadn't, but we

could see past the old-fashioned carpets, curtains and wallpaper – they're easy enough to strip out. And we realised that by knocking through a wall between the kitchen and dining room we could create a more sociable space.'

Along with painting the entire house in a chalky matt-white emulsion to create the blank canvas they were after, Deborah also painted the floorboards. 'We've allowed the wear and tear of time – with the help of our two miniature schnauzers, Tash and Coco – to distress them naturally,' she says. 'You can never achieve a truly realistic look trying to age them artificially.' Other



choices have added to the lived-in look the couple favours, chiefly kitchen cupboards in two different colours (green-grey in the working zone and off white for the island) and an assortment of mismatched fabrics throughout the house – floral, spots, plain, anything goes. Both ideas work their magic to capture the evolutionary style adopted by thrifty country dwellers.

Accessories play their part, too. Deborah has chosen an abundance of colourful knick knacks, such as jars full of colourful and tasty treats, jolly cushions, vintage tea cups, painted frames, cute signs and, at this time of year, gorgeous Christmas baubles. 'You can afford to be really playful when the background is kept neutral,' says Deborah. Not all the walls are bright white, though – the couple chose a pretty flowery wallpaper for a feature wall in the seating area of the kitchen and also used sheets of wrapping paper to enliven the white-painted stairs. 'We don't spend too long there, so we never get tired of it,' says Deborah. 'But even if we did, or if I found paper I preferred, it would be quick to update the look, as they're just odd pieces.'

This is the beauty of the blank canvas house – it's easy enough to swap your soft furnishings round, re-paper over small areas, or try a new colour combination with your festive decorations. 'I'm loving pink and purple with a hint of bronze this year,' says Deborah, 'but who knows what I'll choose for next Christmas?' 25

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DINING ROOM

With its two large windows and a sparkling colour scheme, this area is light and bright at Christmas time.

Suffolk extending dining table, from £960, Maison, would suit this scheme.

Wells dining chair, £309, Lloyd Loom, is similar in style



DISTINCTIVE



HOME TRUTHS

THE PROPERTY

Semi-detached 1930s cottage

LOCATION Hampshire

ROOMS Sitting room/
dining room, kitchen, two
bedrooms, bathroom

PURCHASED 2008

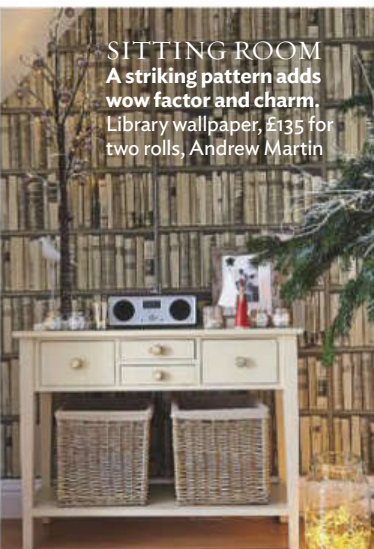
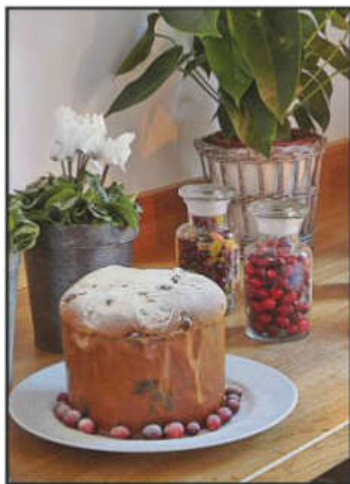
PREVIOUS PROPERTY

'We had sold our last home and were renting a house in the same area,' explains Di.

ALL IS CALM

Di and Rod Figg decorated their small but beautifully formed cottage with elegance, style and simplicity

FEATURE PAT GARRATT | PHOTOGRAPHY TIM IMRIE



SITTING ROOM
A striking pattern adds wow factor and charm. Library wallpaper, £135 for two rolls, Andrew Martin



Di and Rod Figg live in a delightfully bijou cottage, where space is a valued commodity and tidiness reigns supreme. But at Christmas, minimalism flies out the window. Fresh ivy, garlands and frosted pine cones cover every surface, a ceiling-high tree stands by the decorated dining table, and white cyclamen, mercury glass candleholders and twinkling fairy lights add a Nordic touch.

Green, silver and white are the perfect Christmas colours for this small property, which Di and Rod bought seven years ago. Chance played a large part in its purchase. The sister of one of Di's work colleagues, a property

developer, was happy to let Di, as a potential buyer, take an early look, and they loved it straight away. 'It had been very simply renovated and was unfussy, which is exactly what I like,' explains Di.

By the time the couple moved in, the structural work was finished and they couldn't fault the design. The kitchen and bathroom were new and suited their tastes. 'The galley layout in the kitchen made sense in such a small space,' she says. 'As there are no wall units, just shelves, you never feel claustrophobic.'

The decor was all white, which was in keeping with Di's desire for simplicity, and the floorboards upstairs just needed a coat of white paint to brighten

DECORATING TIP *As this is quite a*

KITCHEN

By having no wall units, this compact room feels much larger. Large Caledonian railway wall clock, £60, Tick Tock Clocks, is a good alternative. The Antique Oak Flooring Company has a wide range of reclaimed floorboards like these ones, price on application





SITTING ROOM
Wooden tree ornaments and a woodburning stove complement the rustic feel.

Pioneer 400 stove, from £1,128, Clearview Stoves. The Justine console table is comparable, £535, Maison. Vintage metal star, £39, Rockett St George

small house, we've stuck to pale colours so that it feels lighter and more spacious'

SITTING ROOM

Many textures, wooden furnishings and a pale palette create a Scandinavian look. Felix large leather sofa, from £959, John Lewis, is near-identical. Canterbury cross design bookcase is a close match, £295, Maison





GUEST BEDROOM

Di decided to go for a log-cabin scheme in here.

Timber wallpaper, £77.90 per roll, Andrew Martin. For a ski sham cushion like these ones try Lexington, £59 each



BATHROOM

This calm space has been dressed with coastal touches.

Cuba basin, £40, Victoria Plum, is similar. Wentworth oak mirror suits this style, £175, John Lewis

them up. 'However, the floors in the living areas were carpeted, which I wasn't keen on,' she says. So instead she replaced the carpet and the laminate kitchen floor with oak boards from a local reclamation yard. 'I think it helps the ground floor to flow smoothly, plus it feels more spacious,' says Di.

Last year, the couple installed a woodburning stove in the sitting room. Di also added a touch more

colour and texture via a variety of feature walls. Downstairs, for instance, a small alcove with a desk has been papered to look as if the wall is lined with books. Then in the master bedroom, a smart check paper enlivens one wall, while the guest bedroom boasts a chic travel-trunk design, and another has a rustic ski-chalet feel. Floral fabrics and papers, which one would expect to see

in a small cottage, are not to Di's taste. 'I don't do twee,' she says.

Luckily for Di, her nephew Paul Hervey is an interior designer who shares his aunt's tastes and was happy to help. And although Di was cautious at first, she's delighted with his input. 'I was unsure about some of the wallpapers, but now I love them,' she says. 'And by having different patterns in each room,

I never get bored with the house.' Paul also influenced the seasonal decor, which reflects Di's love of pale hues and natural materials.

On Christmas Eve, the pair attend the church carol service, while on Christmas Day, their son Matthew joins them for a walk by the sea and lunch in the festive dining room. 'Christmas is about the simple, traditional things,' says Di. 'That's the way we like it.' 25

FAVOURITE SHOP *'I love Willow in Lymington – it is a wonderful source of home accessories such as tealights, fur throws and cushions'*



MASTER BEDROOM

'Too much bold colour can be claustrophobic, so I used soft hues instead,' says Di.

Curtains in Exmere Denim, £64m, William Yeoward. Timolin double bed, £499, The Original Bedstead Company



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THE FIRST NOEL



Hannah and Theo Hodnett's labour-of-love cottage is all set for the big day

FEATURE JANET McMEEKIN | PHOTOGRAPHY JEREMY PHILLIPS





SITTING ROOM
Touches of teal and grey enliven the pale scheme. Hobbs three-seater sofa, £799, SofaSofa. Cox & Cox sells similar velvet cushions, from £20 each. Grey Illusion rug, £30; recycled woollen rug, £14, both National Trust



HOME TRUTHS

THE PROPERTY

Red-brick and timber cottage

LOCATION Shropshire

ROOMS Hall, sitting room, kitchen, utility room, cloakroom, three bedrooms, bathroom

BUILT IN 2013

PREVIOUS PROPERTY

'This is our first home together. Before this, we were both living nearby with our parents,' says Hannah.

As newlyweds Hannah and Theo Hodnett clink champagne glasses this Christmas morning in their cosy cottage, they'll have even more reason than usual to celebrate. 'Having tied the knot during the summer, Theo and I are excited as this will be our first Christmas as husband and wife in our home,' explains Hannah. 'We're looking forward to starting the day in style with a little glass of bubbly.'

When the pair, who met eight years ago, began searching for a house, trying to find somewhere in the area proved very difficult. 'Although we knew it made financial sense to buy, initially we did look at a few places to rent as we realised getting onto the property ladder would be a struggle,' explains Hannah.

Having explored various options, Theo's father came up with the solution, generously gifting the couple a third of an acre of his land to build on. 'We were ecstatic and felt so lucky,' says Hannah. 'Neither of us are strangers to self-building as not only do we work in the industry, both sets of parents have built their own homes. Theo, a carpenter, was keen to build from scratch, but I was worried he wouldn't find enough time to tackle such a major project. So we agreed to be as hands-on as possible, but hire builders and other trades.'

The decision to build was made easier thanks to a scheme run by Shropshire Council that simplified planning laws to encourage local people to build their own affordable houses. 'To qualify, we had to fall within certain criteria, such as living and working

locally, and being unable to afford to buy similar-sized houses in the area,' Hannah explains. 'The downside was that we were restricted to a building size of just 100 sq m. But, without the scheme, there was no chance of buying our own home for a very long time.'

When it came to designing their house, the couple had a very clear vision, and liaised with an architectural designer friend of Theo's. 'We have always had an affinity with green-oak-framed structures and were keen to incorporate it in the plans,' says Hannah. 'As well as the internal timber beams, we wanted a Border Oak porch and a lovely inglenook fireplace to inject character and a welcoming, homely feel.'

It was a case of all hands on deck when the build began, with the couple and family members all pitching in. During the 11-month project, the couple often toiled away until midnight. 'Theo was amazing,' says Hannah. 'As well as numerous jobs in the cottage, he also built the double garage.'

Inside, Hannah has chosen hardwearing flooring and a subtle neutral backdrop for the walls, allowing colourful upcycled pieces of painted furniture to take centre stage. 'At the top of our wish list was a smart Shaker-style deVol kitchen, and we're thrilled with the quality and design of it,' says Hannah.

Last May, the couple got married at their local village church, just a mile away from the cottage. 'It was a fantastic day,' Hannah recalls. 'The icing on the cake was holding the reception here at home. In fact, the whole cottage holds such precious memories for us,' she adds. 'This Christmas Day we'll both be toasting a wonderful year, and looking forward to many more happy times to come.' 🍷



HALL

Wood looks welcoming in this space.

For similar wide oak floorboards, try The Solid Wood Flooring Company. Metal lamp, £18, B&Q



3



4

1 & 2 KITCHEN

At Christmas, candles, mistletoe and ivy add a festive touch to the kitchen.

Dresser, £180, Abode Interiors Ludlow, painted in Old White chalk paint, £18.95 per litre, Annie Sloan. Large 'Electric' wall clock, £125, Newgate. Paris pendant light, £50; bin, £45, both Garden Trading

3 HOBBY ROOM

'I love my own space with its lovely views overlooking the fields,' says Hannah.

Table legs painted in Elephant's Breath estate eggshell, £53 for 2.5 litres; walls painted in Skimming Stone estate emulsion, £38 for 2.5 litres, both Farrow & Ball. Pom Pom Studio has decorations like these

4 MASTER BEDROOM

Theo constructed the oak display shelf, and Hannah made the heart picture that is on it.

Shelf brackets, £16 each, Baileys Home & Garden. Toulouse nightstand, £60, Dunelm. Ikea sells plain white bedding like this. Walls painted in China Clay matt emulsion, £15.47 for 2.5 litres, Johnstone's



GUEST BEDROOM

Restful shades create a calming space for visitors.

Metal day bed, £70, Dunelm. Sheepskin, £60, Hayley Hanson

BATHROOM

Tongue-and-groove panelling gives a traditional country look.

Grand thermostatic shower valve with riser, £449, Bathstore



Insight

GLAZING A NEW-BUILD

From installing new windows, as the Hodnetts did, to updating frames, there's plenty of choice



Few of us have expert knowledge when it comes to selecting new windows, which can make the whole process seem overly daunting. Fortunately, there are plenty of informative organisations, such as the Glass and Glazing Federation (GGF), that can help by offering impartial advice.

Do the ground-work

It's important to consider what type of window will best suit your home. If your new-build has been created in a traditional style, or you are replacing windows in a period home, then consider more classic options. These include sash windows and casement windows, which are all regaining popularity, thanks to modern updates such as double and thermal glazing. Frameless or picture windows, where the emphasis is on having an uninterrupted view, make a great feature in contemporary properties.

Recent advances in glass technology mean that windows like these can also improve a home's energy efficiency,

eliminating drafts and reflecting heat back inside. Select a company or individual that is an expert in the type of windows you'd like to fit for maximum results.

Outside the box

While sticking to one design throughout is desirable, consider subtle variations in the windows you choose. For example, a sole picture window in a living room or hallway can look striking when contrasted with sleek bifolds. Equally, casement windows complement traditional forms of door openings, such as French windows and classic orangeries. Look for glazing companies that offer an end-to-end service to ensure a cohesive look.

If replacing your windows isn't an option, consider investing in energy-saving window treatments that prevent heat loss through glazing. For example, Duette window blinds are designed to trap air inside, providing insulation that keeps heat in during the winter and out during the summer, helping to decrease the cost of your home's energy bills.

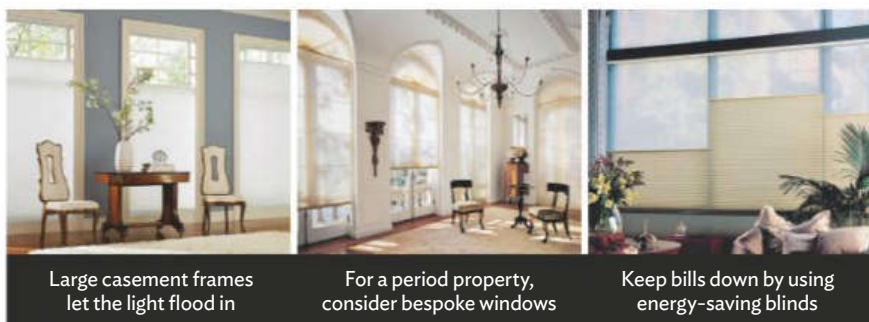
PROFESSIONAL ADVICE

'Shop around before arranging for any work to be carried out. Replacing glass and glazing is a big undertaking and it's important to ensure the installer is trustworthy, offers value for money, comes highly recommended and can show a recognisable accreditation. Getting two or three quotes, as well as checking references from previous customers, will allow you to make an informed decision on the best company or individual for the job.'

Glazing is an investment purchase and may involve a substantial deposit to secure work. It's important to know your rights when it comes to having this money protected. The MyGlazing website can help you find a GGF-registered installer in your area, ensuring you automatically benefit from a free protection scheme, which safeguards your deposit and payments of up to 50 per cent of the contract value or £12,500 (whichever is lower).

Installing new windows can benefit your property from an energy-saving perspective as well as aesthetically. Use our energy-saving calculator to see how much you could reduce your energy bills if you replace your existing windows with modern glazing. It will help you appreciate the true value of this type of home improvement project.'

JAMES LEE, MYGLAZING



Large casement frames let the light flood in

For a period property, consider bespoke windows

Keep bills down by using energy-saving blinds



EXPERT EYE *'Performance and maintenance are important – timber frames generally have a lower heat loss than metal ones, but do require more looking after. A good compromise is a composite aluminium and timber frame'*

CHRIS MACKENZIE, DESIGNSCAPE ARCHITECTS

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Alice Middleton and her parents have transformed a compact semi-detached house into a family home, where they have spent many happy Christmases together

THE PERFECT

FEATURE NAOMI JONES | PHOTOGRAPHY ROBERT SANDERSON





SITTING ROOM

The space is cosy and inviting, thanks to an open fire and a fresh colour scheme.

For similar curtain fabric, try Maggie Levien's Chrysanthemum Weave in Putty, £35m, John Lewis. Cards (top-left shelf), £2 each, Dee Hardwicke. Emma Bridgewater's Starry Skies cups and saucers, £13 for a teacup, have this look

INSPIRING



HOME TRUTHS

THE PROPERTY Victorian semi-detached house

LOCATION Derbyshire

ROOMS Sitting room, kitchen-diner, three bedrooms (one used as a study), bathroom

PURCHASED 1984

PREVIOUS PROPERTY 'I lived and studied in York and Sheffield before moving back here,' says Alice.

LITTLE PRESENT



KITCHEN-DINER

Now open plan with French windows to the garden, the kitchen-diner is a lovely light space.

Burford kitchen cabinets in Grey, just under £6,000, Howdens. Walls painted in Dimity modern emulsion, £42 for 2.5 litres, Farrow & Ball. Bekvam step stool, £14, Ikea. Porcelain tableware, from £3, House at John Lewis

DECORATING ADVICE

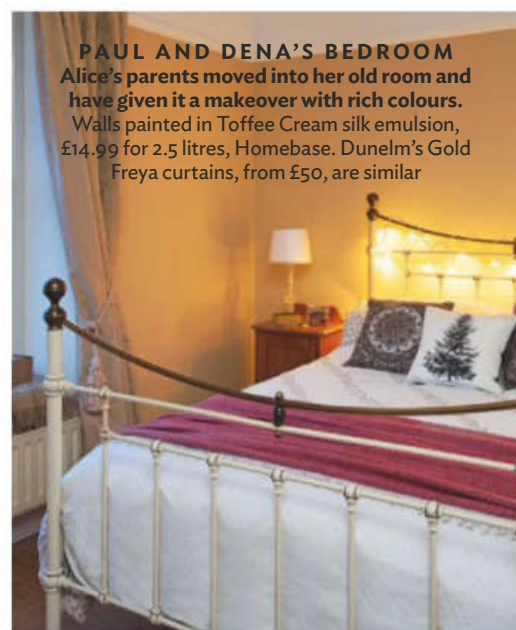
'Make your own Christmas decorations. There are so many tutorials on Pinterest, and they're often super easy'



ALICE'S BEDROOM
Pale green provides the perfect backdrop to brightly coloured raspberry accessories. Curtains in Clarke & Clarke's Delphine, £19m, Graham Sanderson. Gift wrap, tags and bag, from 50p, all Wrapped by Alice



BATHROOM
The bath adds a glamorous feel. Oxford tub, £549, Bathstore. Olunda framed art, £35, Ikea



PAUL AND DENA'S BEDROOM
Alice's parents moved into her old room and have given it a makeover with rich colours. Walls painted in Toffee Cream silk emulsion, £14.99 for 2.5 litres, Homebase. Dunelm's Gold Freya curtains, from £50, are similar

Good things come in small packages, and this is especially true of Alice Middleton's Victorian home, a perfectly formed semi-detached cottage a stone's throw from the beautiful Peak District National Park. 'I grew up here and have many fond memories of family Christmases over the years,' she explains. 'The house was the centre of so many good times and was always full of love. When my health took a downturn a few years ago, and I had to give up work and dreams of doing a PhD, I was lucky enough to be able to move back in here with my parents.'

Despite her setback, Alice was determined not to sit idle: she has since set up her own business making wrapping paper and cards, and has transformed the house not just with her handmade Christmas decorations, but by helping her parents with structural renovations. 'Mum and Dad completely renovated the place when my brother Joe and I were little,' says Alice. 'But since then, they'd only done the odd bit of decorating, so it was time for a bit of a rethink.'

Alice wasn't the only one who wanted to give the place a makeover. 'By knocking the wall down between the kitchen and the gloomy dining room, we've really improved the ground floor,' says Alice's

father Paul, who with his wife Dena, welcomed their daughter's input every step of the way. 'Now we have a lovely space to eat and cook,' he says, 'and we have room for a sofa, too, so it's far more sociable.'

Similarly, the upstairs rooms have been redefined: Paul and Dena's old attic bedroom has been converted into a studio for Alice's paper business, and on the first floor, her brother's former bedroom at the back of the house is now her room, while her parents have taken on the front bedroom, which was originally Alice's. 'It might seem a bit like musical chairs,' says Paul, 'but it has given everyone a new perspective and a little distance, as well as a chance to redecorate.'

'For my room, I chose a soft minty green to offset the pink floral curtains,' says Alice, 'while my parents opted for gold and taupe.' Acting as a divider between the bedrooms is the recently refreshed bathroom: a light, bright space these days, thanks to good-quality vinyl flooring, a fitted roll-top, metro tiles and a lick of pale grey paint.

Now that the update is complete, the family is ready to welcome its extended clan for the holidays. 'It's been wonderful to have the chance to update a home that means so much to me,' says Alice. 'And Christmas is the perfect occasion to celebrate its new look.' 25



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SITTING AREA
Juliet's favourite sofa is home to gold and mocha cushions, which echo the tones of the furniture.

Cushion covers, from £64, Kirsten Hecktermann. Angel sofa, from £750, Sofas and Stuff, is a similar shape. Cover it in Dune Caspian, £32m, Romo

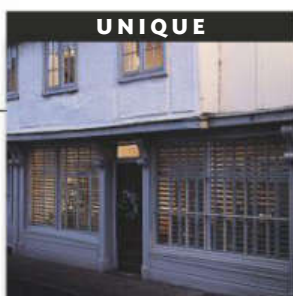
ALL AGLOW

Juliet Bowmaker believes that subtle candlelight is the perfect way to create a beautifully festive home

FEATURE GAIL ABBOTT | PHOTOGRAPHY MARK SCOTT



SITTING ROOM
Soft, neutral walls are the perfect backdrop for vibrant chairs. Walls painted in Strong White estate emulsion, £38 for 2.5 litres, Farrow & Ball. Painting by Peter Griffin, price on application, Acuity Arts



UNIQUE

HOME TRUTHS

THE PROPERTY

16th-century townhouse

LOCATION Suffolk

ROOMS Hall, sitting area, dining area, kitchen, four bedrooms (one en suite), bathroom

PURCHASED 2013

PREVIOUS PROPERTY

'My last home was a medieval house in Suffolk,' says Juliet.



HALL

A wall-mounted console table acts as a display area for a collection of some of Juliet's favourite pieces.

Robin Welch vase, from £150, Bircham Gallery. Wooden sculptures by Carol Sinclair, prices on application, Acuity Arts. For similar silver pots try Oxbow & Peach



DINING AREA

'I love the way this print by Damien Hirst holds the space on this wall,' says Juliet. Vintage tablecloths, from £85, Rebecca's Aix Home. Bespoke shutters, Hillarys



KITCHEN

At Christmas Juliet decorates the mantelpiece with a berry wreath and garlands of real ivy, draped behind her collection of antique and vintage jugs.

Christmas Past berry wreath, £35, John Lewis, is similar. Davey Lighting Medium Pendant, £315, Lighting Matters, is comparable. Tea towel, £10, Fergusons Irish Linen

Twenty years of running her own art gallery has given Juliet Bowmaker a good eye for displaying paintings to their best advantage, and although she no longer runs the gallery, she is still passionate about beautiful art and artefacts. 'I am a self-confessed art addict,' she smiles. Over the years Juliet has amassed a collection of paintings and textiles that sit happily with antique furniture she has inherited from her family.

Juliet's style seamlessly blends an eclectic mix of pieces from many different cultures and periods. At Christmas the rooms glow with firelight and scented candles, while natural decorations complement the Tudor beams and polished wood. 'I'm very influenced by my surroundings,' she explains. 'I need a home that fits my visual sense, so I don't think I could relax in a modern house.'

When she came across an original townhouse in the centre of her local market town, she jumped at it. 'It had been for sale for over a year, so I was able to negotiate the price,' says Juliet. 'I was thrilled by the prospect of living in town, with lots of friends close by.'

Over the centuries, the four-bedroom house has been altered and remodelled. Large, street-facing windows point to its incarnation as a 19th-century shop, and in Juliet's bedroom, the Georgian coffered ceiling is an indication of the prosperity of its 18th-century occupants. On the ground floor,



MASTER BEDROOM

The antique quilt bedcover came from Newark Antiques Fair.

Mahogany sleigh bed, £704, Anderson Bradshaw. Blind made in Christobel duck egg fabric, £62m, Kate Forman



BATHROOM

'I painted the bath exterior to match the room,' explains Juliet.

Bath painted in Matchstick estate eggshell, £53 for 2.5 litres, Farrow & Ball

the walls and partitions were removed by more recent owners, leaving only the supporting beams, and allowing light to stream in from both the front and the back of the property.

When she moved in, Juliet felt that the house looked disjointed. In the guest bedroom a turquoise carpet hid the pine Georgian floorboards, now freshly sanded and oiled. 'It was a case of giving the place a unified feel with colour and bringing the original floorboards back to life, rather than undertaking a major renovation,' she reflects. Now soft, off-white walls and woodwork create a calming backdrop to Juliet's antique furniture, gold picture frames and family silver, with a restrained colour palette of teal and gold for the sofas and cushions.

Although the overall mood of the house is traditional, Juliet isn't averse to throwing in contemporary elements like the large Damien Hirst dot print in the dining room, or the occasional modern abstract painting.

Juliet recently co-launched 'Acuity Arts,' an art consultancy business in East Anglia, and every year during the festive season she runs a pop-up gallery. The first Christmas that she lived in the house, she held the gallery in her new home – the big windows made it a perfect venue. 'But this year a shop is hosting the gallery,' explains Juliet, and so she is looking forward to her house simply being a home over the festive period. 'With the tree up in the front window, I'll just sit back with friends and family, and relax.' 🍷

FAVOURITE SHOP 'Oxbow & Peach is an Aladdin's cave all year round, and for Christmas shopping it's wonderful'



GUEST ROOM

Juliet regularly hosts actors from the local theatre, especially when the Christmas pantomime comes to town.

Hannah black double bedstead, £179, Dunelm, is a good match. Etienne bedspread, from £110, The White Company, is similar. Willow star, £13, Notonthehighstreet.com has this look. Herringbone rug, £50, National Trust

KITCHEN-DINER

Three pendants light the area where David prepares meals. The Cavendish pendant lights, £60 each, Garden Trading, are comparable. Rapport walnut bar stools, £99 each, Atlantic Shopping, have a similar look to these. The lidded glass cake stand, £75, The White Company, would look good here



REPLANNED

HOME TRUTHS

THE PROPERTY 1850s milking barn, converted in 2008

LOCATION Nottinghamshire

ROOMS Hall, sitting/music room, kitchen-diner, TV room, five bedrooms (three en suite) two bathrooms

PURCHASED 2014

PREVIOUS PROPERTY

'Before, we lived in a four bedroom, new-build nearby,' says Margarita.

GOOD CHEER

Margarita and David Knibbs' convivial barn is the perfect setting for hosting friends and family over the festive season

FEATURE PAT GARRATT | PHOTOGRAPHY RACHAEL SMITH



When you live in a small village, where neighbours are friendly and hospitable, it's natural for a community to get together at Christmas. For Margarita and David Knibbs, holding an open house over the festive period provides the perfect chance to say 'thank you' to all the locals who helped them settle so quickly into village life. This will be their second Christmas in their spectacular barn conversion, and they already acknowledge that it is likely to become their 'forever home'.

'We had been eyeballing the barn for ages,' says Margarita, who with her husband David, was living a few miles away in a new-build house. That property met all their needs, but it was on a busy main road. 'I wanted something old and quaint, while David likes modern homes,' says Margarita. 'He loves cooking and many of the older properties we looked at had tiny kitchens. This barn, which was half-renovated, came on the market three

years ago but it was too big a project for us. It sold quickly, we dismissed it from our minds and eventually put our own house up for sale.'

But luck favoured the Knibbs. Having sold their own home but failed to find a new one, Margarita was walking past a local estate agency when she saw the barn had come back on the market, that very day. 'The renovations were all done,' she says. 'We went to view it immediately and, the minute we opened the door, we knew that it would be perfect for us.' Combining traditional beams and architecture with every mod con, the barn had everything they were looking for. Bright, welcoming and with space for friends and family to visit – David and Margarita have four grown-up children between them – it was a serendipitous find. Within three months they had moved in, taking much of their existing furniture, which fitted comfortably in its new surroundings.

The biggest outlay involved improving the barn's external woodwork. 'It had dried up so



SITTING/MUSIC ROOM

The couple added the wow-factor mirrored wall around the fireplace.

Woodburning stove from a selection by Esse.

The Multicheck natural throw, £115, Melin

Tregwynt, is a similar style. Stags and candlesticks from a selection at Gracegentle



MASTER EN SUITE
Soothing grey and a gently curved bath make for a relaxed space. See the Abbe freestanding bath, from £400, Bath Empire. The Godmorgon high cabinet with mirrored door, £160, Ikea, would work. Nordic House sells aged metal floor candleholders, £112



NATASHA'S BEDROOM
Lime and fuchsia in Margarita's daughter's space make a change from the neutral shades elsewhere. The Austen bed, £2,295, And So To Bed, is a good match. The Mabillon bedside chest, £310, Brissi, is similar. Take a look at the knitted throw in Dandelion, £39, House by John Lewis





MASTER BEDROOM
French-style furniture suits this room's grand proportions.

Try the antique white French-style bedside cabinet, £115, Ongar Furniture Boutique. The silver sequin cushion, £7, Asda, would look at home here, as would Ikea's Ludde sheepskin rug, £30

DESIGN TIP *Although a vaulted ceiling up to the roof may look dramatic in a barn conversion, be aware that it means losing space for bedrooms above'*



we had to have all the exterior painted,' says Margarita. Internally the oak doors also looked parched, so 'we bought 20 litres of Danish oil and coated all 25 doors,' she adds.

Because of David's restaurant-quality cooking skills, the kitchen now has a wealth of gadgets, including a steam oven, wine cooler, coffee machine and Thermomix. As a result, some 20 extra power points were added to cope with the increased electricity load and, in addition, a Sonos music system was installed, which streams music throughout the house.

The ultra-modern bathrooms were big selling points when the couple bought the house. 'We were delighted that we didn't have to make any changes to them,' says Margarita. The only problem was that the Jacuzzi bath in the master en suite didn't work. 'Luckily our electrician discovered the reason why – there was no electrical connection, just a dangerous

live wire dangling under the bath that he fixed,' she says. Little remained to be done apart from repainting the stark white, internal walls in softer shades of off-whites and greys.

For Christmas, however, Margarita goes to town with decorations. Her mother contributes stunning floral arrangements that often include an unusual mix of rosemary, eucalyptus, hebe and holly, all gathered from her garden or woodland. Then Margarita's friend, Denise, who runs a local homeware and gift shop, Gracegentle, brings along decorative items such as candleholders, lanterns and baubles to add a festive touch to each room. With parents, children and other relatives invited for Christmas lunch, the old barn is packed to the rafters, which is just how the Knibbs like it. 'This place feels as if we have finally found our dream home,' says Margarita. 'We look forward to many happy years here.' 25

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Vol 18 No 12 ISSN 1369529 © Time Inc. (UK) Ltd, 2015.

Distributed by Marketforce (UK) Ltd, 5 Churchill Place, Canary Wharf, London E14 5HU (020 378 79001)

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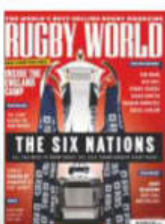
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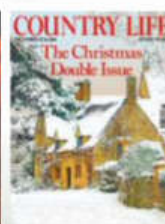
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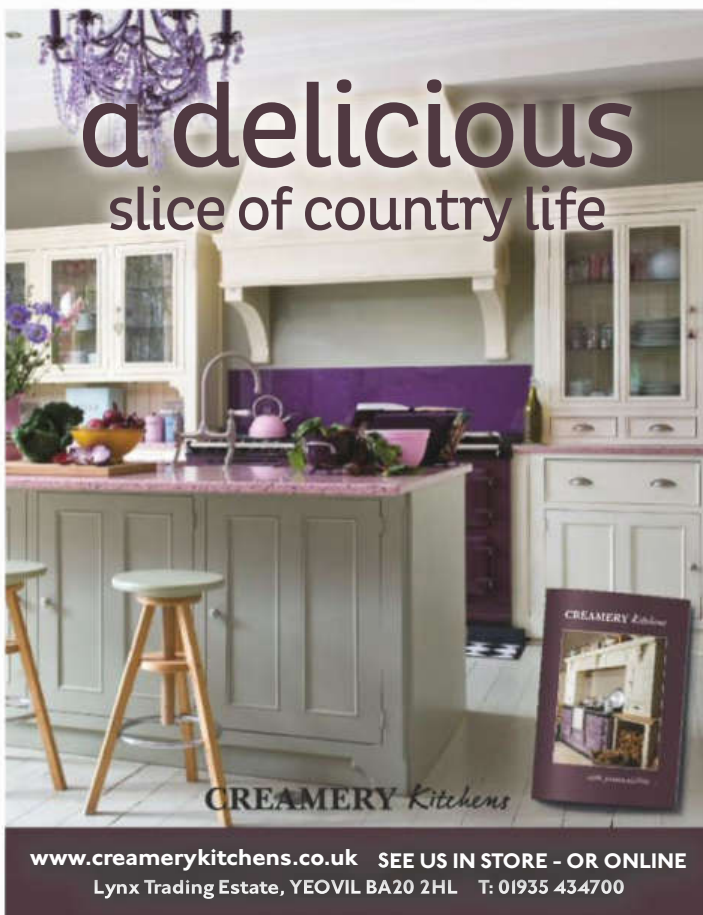
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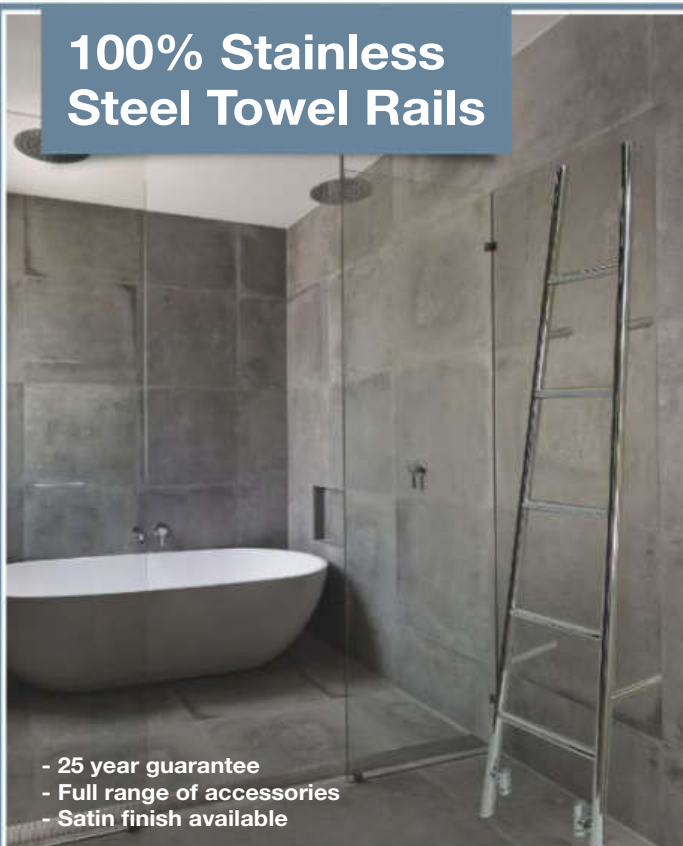
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ROOM ENVY

Each month we bring you a scheme that intrigues, delights or dazzles us

At Christmas time, there's nothing better than curling up on the sofa next to a roaring fire in a cosy living room that's brimming with decorations. Which is exactly what we can imagine doing here.

The room's mismatched fabrics and furnishings are what makes it so appealing. Inviting armchairs with plump cushions and soft throws provide the perfect place to


relax, while a rustic coffee table offers ample space to scatter festive treats and mulled drinks for any visitors that may drop by.

But what gives it a real seasonal feel is the use of fairy lights, which haven't just been hung on the tree. By adding them to the garland above the mantelpiece and wrapping them round the wood in the log basket, there's a subtle glow that lifts the mood, creating a welcoming ambience. 25

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